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ABSTRACT

The 52 abstracts in these 29 serial issues describe innovative approaches to teaching and learning in the community college. Sample topics include a checklist for conference presenters, plan to retain students, faculty home page, improvements in writing instruction, cooperative learning, support for high risk students, competitive colleges and the community college student, computerized student orientation, final exams, developmental writing software, community involvement, basic composition, a team approach to orientation, an innovative speech course, encouragement for proofreading, undergraduate student research, computers as scientific instruments, a theatrical approach to English as a Second Language (ESL), women's support services, motivational development, student empowerment, English as a Second Language, literacy development, grading methods, empowering the re-entry student, making tests more user-friendly, math meets, building connections, student telecounselors, e-mail, educational technology, humor's role in preparing future leaders, community interaction, connecting curriculum, leadership, using student-initiated questions in instruction, connection of curriculum, faculty partnership with library staff, and facilitating classroom discussion. (YKH)

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Innovation Abstracts
Volume XIX, Numbers 1-29, 1997

Suanne D. Roueche
Editor

University of Texas at Austin

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VOLUME XVIV, NUMBER 1

INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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A Checklist for Conference Presenters

After developing an idea, submitting an abstract, and waiting for a reply, you finally have your presentation proposal accepted. Congratulations! Here are some tips for making a strong, effective presentation.

Avoid the Pitfalls

- Avoid nesting in one spot. Find at least three strategic presentation points and move among them.
- Move or gesture only when you want to emphasize a particular point.
- Use overheads (if applicable) to make main points. Additional information belongs in handouts.
- Avoid "busy" graphics. Keep the focal points clear. If necessary, enlarge pertinent information, and give only brief examples of data. Put complete data in handouts.
- Do not read from a script. Use notes only for quick reference.

Accentuate the Positives

- Provide an organized packet of handouts to support your presentation and distribute it at the beginning.
- Organize your presentation into an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. It is always helpful if the introduction has an attention-getter.
- Arrive early to make certain that your audiovisuals can be clearly seen and/or heard anywhere in the presentation room. Bad audiovisuals are worse than no audiovisuals at all. Type any visuals with a font size no smaller than 24.
- Address your audience as colleagues. Maintain eye contact and a friendly tone of voice. Be flexible and facilitative.
- Encourage audience involvement. Accept questions during your presentation and allow time for question or comments at the end.
- Offer positive suggestions as to how participants may apply your information to their classrooms, advisement, counseling, etc. Many suggestions will fit most effectively into your handouts.
- Speak in concise English. Define any terms or acronyms that may be unclear to any members of your audience.
- Include as much extra information as you want in your handouts. Your presentation has a time limit; your handouts are limited only by your copy budget!
- Include a bibliography of references.
- Your information was exciting enough that the proposal referees decided someone would want to hear it; let your own enthusiasm justify that decision. Relax and enjoy your presentation. People attend because they want to learn something from you. Make their experience (and yours) both instructive and pleasant.

* * *

The way that an audience receives a conference session depends as much upon effective presentation techniques as upon the strength of the ideas. Make your presentation and your ideas shine!

Lee Brewer Jones, *Associate Professor, Developmental English*

Margie Clark, *Assistant Professor, Developmental Math*

Janet Hollier, *Assistant Professor, Humanities*

For further information, contact the authors at DeKalb College - Gwinnett Campus, 1301 Atkinson Road, Lawrenceville, GA 30244.

The Nineteenth Annual
NISOD
International Conference on
Teaching and Leadership Excellence
May 25-28, 1997
Austin Convention Center
Austin, Texas
For a conference brochure or presentation proposal form, call (512) 471-7545

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Community College Leadership Program, Department of Educational Administration
College of Education, The University of Texas at Austin, SZB 348, Austin, Texas 78712-1293

Plan to Retain Students

Student retention is a universal concern, and faculty need a personal, proactive plan for retaining students. The following tips help faculty create and document their own retention strategy/plan.

- Set a positive tone from the first class session. Set high expectations for yourself and for your students. Use students' names from the start. Make certain that students know your name, where your office is, what office hours you maintain, and your office phone number. Encourage students to contact you outside of class. (For part-time faculty, how is it best to contact you? The division office? At home?)
- Distribute and collect student data. Ask for the standard name-rank-serial number and course-specific information, but also for potentially more useful information such as "What is it you especially want me to know about you?" Use that student information to best advantage.
- Continuously encourage students to make good grades. Good grades—and the hard work and commitment that it takes to earn them—are accurate predictors of success in attaining college/career/personal goals.
- Give positive strokes to all students. Invoking and applauding active student involvement can stimulate dramatic effects. Praise is powerful.
- Telephone students whose absences are likely to negatively affect their grades. Convey your sincere concern.
- Advise students about any study skills or test-taking seminars that are being offered and encourage them to attend. (You may be influential in having those seminars scheduled at a time convenient for your students. You may even volunteer to facilitate one of those seminars.)
- Encourage students to form mutual aid societies/study groups. Peer pressure of the positive kind can have multiple benefits.
- Conduct individual midterm conferences in private. These personal touch conferences should provide students with a status report of their progress in the course, elicit concerns/problems students may have in order to take corrective action (if possible), and give students encouragement to persevere and succeed.
- Offer to help students contact their advisors to enroll in their next courses rather than enrolling during open registration. One of the benefits of registering with an advisor is that an on-the-spot transcript audit can be conducted to verify/alert students of their progress toward achieving their college goals.
- When submitting final grades, write your best students a note telling them how you appreciated their positive contributions to the success of the course and that you look forward to seeing them back on campus.

Michael E. Petty, *Division Chair, General Education*

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Faculty Home Page—More Than a Gimmick

All the talk about technology in education may lead you to believe that a Web home page for faculty is just a gimmick to make faculty look good, but it can be a powerful teaching tool. I have designed a student-centered home page, *The Student Writer's Web*, for teaching English composition and literature. This home page helps me achieve three goals: simplifying the use of the Web for beginners, facilitating the research process, and expanding the audience for student essays.

While student presence on the Internet is growing, beginners are often overwhelmed by the volume of information and their limited computer experience. The faculty page can teach students to improve communication and channel creativity by gaining optimum use of the Web. My home page is divided into eight categories, each of which may be utilized for either group or individual instruction in computer, research, and writing skills. Novices learn to use the medium as they read the contents of each part, and more advanced users quickly discover new sources of information. The most helpful sections so far have been Web Basics, Resources for Research, and Student Essays.

Web Basics offers some simple terms, guides to the Netscape browser, and—for those interested—links to using HTML, the language for writing web pages. The document may be printed and distributed as a handout for students who need extra time to absorb the new concepts.

Under Resources for Research, two forms allow students to search from the site by simply typing a word or phrase. Alta Vista (Digital Corporation) has one of the largest databases, and Excite provides concept and review searching as well as a rating system which sorts sites by confidence. Although there are dozens more search engines to use, the forms are an efficient way of teaching keyword searching for Internet and library research. Links to the search tips explain how to limit both simple and advanced queries. The research section lists the Clearinghouse and W3 Catalog for subject-oriented searches. Students can make use of the catalog's tree branch system for help in narrowing a topic for a paper.

The last items in the research section are libraries. The Library of Congress provides extensive information for legal, copyright, and historical topics which may be accessed and printed from their web site. If computers are equipped with a telnet application program, students may also access and browse the catalogs of area libraries.

The Student Essays file is a collection of writing composed for course assignments. At the end of each semester, I ask students to choose the best work from their portfolio to read to the class. Many are inspired as much by successful student writing as they are by professional creations. Thus, while this web file began as a means of extending the writer's audience to a wider community, it has become a working incentive to achieve good writing and to generate ideas for current student writers.

While all the posted essays follow a traditional format, some make use of hypertext links to related sites. My Basic HTML guide (part of Web Basics) encourages writers to tap into the Web's power by finding and creating links to valuable Internet sources. I advise students to keep an electronic copy of their work which is easily converted to HTML for posting on the Web.

The Student Writer's Web is an enhancement, not a substitute, for the work we do in the classroom. Its future role will expand as problems of accessibility and limited computer skills are overcome. For now, it is an effective tool for teaching computer skills and research techniques, and for publishing student writing.

Sheila Booth, *Instructor, English*

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The Complete Writing Course

"Take whatever lies about the tongue and turn it into a butterfly" was a favorite student response to my in-class writing assignment: "In 25 words or less, describe how to tie a shoelace." In 12 words this student did what I have been advising students to do throughout my 25 years of teaching college-level writing.

With an employment history divided between academia and journalism during the past two and a half decades, I have been writing the same comments on paper after paper from semester to semester from generation to generation. Like many of my English composition colleagues, I have been tempted to write a text that would be definitive work to show someone, anyone, how to compose articulate thoughts and images with maximum efficiency. I have fantasized about achieving fame and immortality for a semester or two by leaving behind a valuable compendium of tips and tricks that will make students become clearer thinkers and more expressive communicators.

Of the hundreds of papers I read each semester, one ubiquitous, overriding problem has not changed. Most students are not comfortable with providing ample, concrete details to illustrate their points. As a result, I find myself writing a basic refrain over and over again: "Use more details, fewer words." Now, each semester I provide my students with one work that offers more than a lifetime of writing courses, reading seminars, and study skills workshops: Francis Bacon's single-paragraph treatise "Of Studies." In less than one page, this centuries-old essay packs all of the advice one could possibly need or tolerate.

In class I have found something productive to do with my students' time. They write. This takes two forms. The first is done in class. These assignments, like describing a paper clip or the weather, are primarily designed to get them accustomed to working under pressure. The second kind of assignment is due approximately every other week. In one or two pages, using the classic modes such as description, comparison and contrast, and illustration, students are asked to write about topics of their own choice. They determine the content. I supply the critiques. My only suggestion is that for each paper they engage in the simple, Thoreau-like act of driving "life into a corner and [reducing] it to its lowest terms."

The refrain "use more details, fewer words" becomes a leitmotif for the semester. However, by mid-semester, it begins to take hold. The papers become noticeably more vivid, more engaging, and, as a result, more successful.

I am tempted to conclude with a new system, another innovative lurch into the mire of writing pedagogy, but I will not. Teaching writing is almost as absurd as writing about how to teach writing. Writing cannot be taught. At best, it can be practiced, encouraged, supported, and scrutinized.

The two best writing teachers I had were my two grandfathers, immigrants from Czechoslovakia and Italy. The former always kept a dictionary at arm's length whenever he was reading or writing. The other, a barber, simply told me that I should get a blank book and write in it every day. He assured me that people who did this led a rich life.

Even though I was only ten, and his advice was punctuated with riffs on his mandolin and pithy shots into his spittoon, I was curious. When I asked him what I should write, he thoughtfully chewed a bit and then said that it did not really matter. "Just make sure you use the right words," he concluded before going back to the strings that he had been nimbly picking.

Gary Mielo, *Assistant Professor, Journalism*

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Retreating into Comfort Zones

As an English instructor I am frequently told—by students, medical doctors, video store clerks, and ministers—how intimidating English was or is. For some unexplainable reason, although many people know what idea they want to express, they just "can't put it down on paper." Translated, enrolling in an English course usually means writing essays, and writing essays is outside many students' comfort zones. Therefore, if putting it down on paper is always the primary measure of a student's level of comprehension, there is no doubt that the comprehension level is oftentimes inaccurately calculated.

With this in mind—along with a desire to more accurately capture the scope of my students' understanding—I chose the writing assignment which seemed the most difficult for students to approach, and I allowed them to express their understanding of material covered in ways other than just "putting it down on paper."

For the majority of my Introduction to Literature students, poetry was the culprit. Students thought they understood the significance of concepts such as imagery, rhyme schemes, and persona; however, they were not confident that they could convey their understanding in a written essay. And, after five years of reading many not-so-effective essays on poetry, I was inclined to agree. Therefore, I allowed myself to exceed the boundaries of my own comfort zone (evaluating ability according to the quality of written essays) by allowing my students to retreat to *their* individual comfort zones. The results were fascinating.

Instead of having to write an essay on poetry, students were encouraged to present their understanding of a particular poem (subject to my approval) through an artistic medium which most effectively reflected their strengths and talents. At first, some students were skeptical about my seriousness. They could not believe that I was actually willing to allow them to sing, dance, sculpt, present a drama, write a companion poem, paint a picture, or arrange a musical score—just some of the possibilities—to express their understanding of poetry. Furthermore, they could even work collaboratively.

However, after the initial shock subsided, many students began preparing their presentations. I encouraged students to focus on how meaning emerged for them personally, rather than relying upon critical "authorities" to dictate meaning. Furthermore, during the actual presentation, each student was required to justify why he or she selected a particular poem and a particular medium, and why he or she made specific choices as those choices related to the poem being interpreted. Therefore, in addition to determining the significance of imagery and rhyme scheme, the process of selecting a poem and a medium of presentation became crucial.

After approving the selected poems, I observed the class; individual students pored over various lines and stanzas, trying to gain understanding but, more importantly, trying to determine how they could express their understanding via their chosen medium. Groups of students attempted to reach consensus on meaning, explain how it was conveyed, and express their understanding of meaning through musical compositions or dramatic performances. My observations alone reinforced the validity of allowing students to retreat into their comfort zones to express their level of comprehension of material they considered difficult and intimidating.

On the days of the presentations, anticipation and fascination reigned: presenters were eager to show off their talents, and observers were surprisingly awed by the overall quality of many of the performances. It was encouraging and refreshing to listen to students who rarely spoke in class explain how the various colors they used in a painting or papier-mâché represented the mood of a specific poem. It was equally refreshing to listen to a musical composition and then hear students discuss how they attempted to express the impact of rhyme schemes on meaning.

Of course, not all students performed. Some students who believed that writing was their greatest strength chose to write an essay, a viable option from the start. But, at least 90% of the students indicated that the assignment forced them to think more critically about poetry and what it means. Additionally, students commented that they became more interested in effectively relating their understanding of that meaning

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to others. After all, they were no longer merely doing the assignment for me. Perhaps the most rewarding aspect of this assignment was that students expressed appreciation for the opportunity to retreat into their comfort zones, to prove what they had learned in a manner comfortable for them.

Sabrina B. Cokley, *Instructor, English*

For further information, contact the author at Tri-County Technical College, P. O. Box 587, Pendleton, SC 29670.

Cooperative Learning to Enhance Customer Service

Faculty, support staff, and administrators at Genesee Community College met to analyze specific customer service issues campuswide. Groups of five members each appointed a leader, a speaker, a recorder, and two encouragers. They listed as many customer service issues as they could, discussed and prioritized them, and set priorities for the next workshops. After a full hour on these tasks, the speaker for each group reported results of the discussion.

The success of this session was stunning! There was enough material generated for the next two years, a clear direction about future workshops (e.g., internal communication will be the next subject), and a wealth of recommended solutions.

One might argue that any grouping of concerned people would work and that the need to talk would make the specific roles used in these cooperative learning groups unnecessary. However, unless these groups are structured to maximize everyone's participation, then the usual few will dominate. Further, the sessions will likely deteriorate into gripe sessions. It is all too easy to blame our limited resources (not enough money, not enough equipment, not enough staff, not enough time) for our situation and *leave it at that*. But, for real change to take place, it is important to redirect the negative energy that exists when resources are not only limited but potentially more limited in the upcoming budget year.

The roles assigned in cooperative learning models work. The leader orchestrates the discussion, keeps everyone on task, but is not the speaker. The speaker promotes the work of the group but will only be as clear as the recorder has been in recording the ideas of the group. And, the recorder will only be effective if everyone's ideas have been clearly articulated, understood, discussed, and translated into potential actions, which depends on the encouragers. The encouragers are to make sure everyone is allowed to speak and not become negative. They are supposed to remind group members of some of the good things that are being implemented and not allow anyone to spiral downward into depression over the state of affairs.

For the purposes of campus community building, cooperative learning focuses on carefully designed interactions that emphasize individual responsibility within a framework of person-to-person positive interdependence. Appropriately enough, the motto for our customer service initiative is Genessee Unites to Serve (G.U.S.). Thanks to this cooperative learning experiment, we are well on our way to encouraging healthy interdependence.

Peggy L. Curry, *Associate Dean, Off Campus Instruction*

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START—Special Support for High-Risk Students

Community colleges offer an open door to students who might not otherwise have a chance at higher education. But beyond the pale of those born-again learners, what about the next level—those who face special barriers that seem to preclude any college?

Kirkwood Community College found some encouraging answers to that question when it partnered with the Hall-Perrine Foundation in START (Supported Training and Retraining). The START program offers enhanced financial assistance and support services to persons under the 150 percent poverty income line who also face other barriers to education. In return, the special students must strictly conform to individual education plans. They are required to enroll in career-option type programs leading to employment.

In its first five years, START guided 64 percent of its students to completion—either finishing a prescribed study program, progressing toward graduation, transferring to another college, or completing Kirkwood studies and finding employment. Of special significance is that completion records and retention rates for many special high-risk students are higher than for the student body at-large.

Students make application to START through a college committee and are formally accepted by the project director. START committee members study each application for evidence of some prior success: e.g., adequate high school grades, a GED diploma, good standardized test scores, or positive references from educators or employers. Students must complete their education plan within four consecutive semesters. They are required to submit class attendance reports to project staff members on a weekly basis. Students are allowed as much as $4,000 for college costs and for child care assistance during their four-semester period of study. Staff advisors regularly monitor students' progress on their individual plans. Students are not allowed to change study majors or alter their individual education plans without advisor approval. They are not allowed to enroll in liberal arts programs, but must focus on specific career goals.

The goal of the program is to move high-risk students toward self-sufficiency, or productive employment. Kirkwood administrators say that an internal goal is to teach students to learn how the education "game," or process, really works.

One START objective was to bring a new pool of at-risk students to college. It has accomplished this by including representatives of many community helping agencies on its advisory board. Close cooperation between the college and several non-education agencies in the community has caused persons who otherwise might not consider college to enroll for career studies. This strong link to community has produced a flow of needy students by referral from the agencies.

A large majority of START students are women. Almost three-fourths have need for child care assistance while enrolled. Some are victims of abuse or have special personal problems. All face some special barriers to education.

Kirkwood's alliance with Hall-Perrine is also unique. The foundation historically has supported private college causes and has not donated to public colleges. It has never funded programs that give direct financial support to individual students. But START appealed to the foundation as a way to improve quality of life in the community by targeting needy students, and Hall-Perrine provided $1 million for the new five-year program. Support from the private foundation makes the special support for high-risk students in START financially feasible.

Bill Duffy, *Program Director, Marketing and Media Relations*

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Competitive Colleges and the Community College Student

More than 20 years ago, one of Arapahoe Community College's English professors surmised that even the most extraordinary students at our college seemed to think that their transfer options were limited to in-state, tax-supported colleges and universities. He began to work with outstanding students to help them prepare for and make application to some of our nation's elite, more competitive colleges. Success was quick in coming: one of his earliest transfer students graduated Phi Beta Kappa, with distinction, in political science, from Colorado College; another graduated *magna cum laude* from Lake Forest.

When the college president expressed an interest in establishing an honors program, this same professor argued that honors courses in our regular curricular offerings were not warranted, that courses were of a calibre to challenge even the brightest students. Rather than instituting special courses, this professor proposed that the Honors Institute *identify and guide students who could qualify for admission to the nation's elite, competitive colleges*. That remains the guiding principle of the Honors Institute to this day and is part of the college's mission.

Many of our transfer students have distinguished themselves at our nation's most prestigious colleges and universities. Two students were invited by St. John's College (Santa Fe/Annapolis) to skip the B.A. and go directly into the M.A. program. The first won that college's annual fiction writing award, and now teaches in our English department and serves as an Honors Institute advisor. New advisors are urged to attend the colloquia to acquaint themselves with Honors Institute strategies.

Among the more than 50 elite colleges that have accepted ACC students are Amherst, Brandeis, UCLA, Carnegie-Mellon, Claremont, The Colorado College, Georgetown, Lake Forest, Notre Dame, Northwestern, Ripon, and Willamette. Using a conservative estimate, 218 students over the last 15 years have saved well in excess of four million dollars in the costs of their final two undergraduate years.

Honors Institute students must carry a GPA of 3.0 or better; pursue a traditional degree program; and demonstrate accomplishments in extracurricular activities. They must work closely with an Honors Institute advisor in determining curriculum, work hours, extracurricular activities, and so on. And, they must attend a series of colloquia. Topics discussed in the colloquia include the importance of curriculum; importance of extracurricular activities; the liberal arts tradition; meaning of a degree; meaning of a major; selecting transfer colleges; using relevant reference works; contacting transfer colleges; making applications; writing a resumé; planning for graduate school; financial aid; private and public colleges; diversity as part of the educational experience. Currently, 10 faculty members serve as advisors in the Honors Institute. They perform this service as a "mission of love," receiving no compensation for their efforts.

The Honors Institute has become a unique part of our mission.

Otto Lewis Pfeiff, *Director, Honors Institute at Arapahoe*

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Computerized Student Orientation

Student orientations can inform students about college procedures and services, and simultaneously introduce them to the future. With a computerized orientation, students are faced with the computer age in a personal, nonthreatening manner as soon as they enroll in college. While an important component of student retention, student orientation programs require considerable time and staff to adequately serve the numbers of new students. We decided that our small campus size and limited staffing dictated a computerized method of orientation delivery.

Need for Change

The Glades Campus of Palm Beach Community College is the smallest of the four campuses in the district. Five hundred to 700 students attend classes each term, and orientation is required of all new students prior to registration. The student services staff is small, and the demand for academic advisement, coupled with the needs of new students, creates a staffing problem. In addition, most students are undecided about careers and unaware of financial aid and scholarship opportunities. Collaboration between student services and the campus computer resource coordinator has created an efficient and effective computerized orientation process to solve the problems created by such demands on the system. This solution combines orientation, career exploration, and scholarship discovery; it optimizes campus resources and enhances the quality of new students' experiences.

Computerized Multimedia Orientation

Orientation begins the moment new students arrive to enroll. They receive a packet of information (which includes the college application, catalog, admission checklist, orientation evaluation form, and campus pencil) and are screened for placement scores such as the SAT or ACT. After screening, they participate in the campus orientation.

The orientation includes a customized multimedia computer presentation which utilizes music, multiple voice narration, digital full-motion video, and graphics to introduce pertinent college information, policies, and procedures. It may also include career exploration and scholarship researching. The narrators for the presentation are currently enrolled students and campus staff. The presentation, accompanied by an admission checklist, leads students through the admission process.

Career Exploration. New students are directed to complete one of three automated career guidance inventories: *Merkler Style Preference*, *Career Match*, or *Vocational Interest Profile*. Each of these programs helps students investigate career interests, skills, and abilities. The results are provided to the advisor or dean of student services for review. Students who wish to continue exploration are provided follow-up appointments.

Scholarship Researching. Students use *SOURCES* to investigate methods of financing their education. This program is a computer database developed by the Florida Department of Education's Bureau of Career Development for the purpose of researching the availability of local, state, and federal scholarships and loans. Students receive printouts of the results of their search and share this information with an advisor or the dean of student services.

Academic Advisement

After completing the College Placement Test, career inventories, and *SOURCES*, students meet individually with an advisor or the dean of student services for academic advising. During these sessions students raise questions and concerns that may not have been covered in the computer presentation. At this point, students seem better informed about the colleges' services and procedures.

Usefulness and Flexibility

The entire orientation process takes about two hours (or three, if students must take a placement test). Except for academic advisement, the orientation takes place in the Center for Personalized Instruction (CPI), our study skills laboratory. This system allows the student services staff to provide quality advisement and counseling to new and returning students without

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diminishing other services. The multimedia computer orientation provides information efficiently and in a lively fashion. The presentation is digital and can be updated easily to accommodate new information such as changes in college policy, procedures, or personnel.

Individualized and Student-Centered

Although students start the admission and orientation process using the computer, they complete the process working with a student services official. This orientation benefits working students especially as the process can be completed in one visit to the college or over several days.

Results

During spring 1995/96 registration, 75 students participated in orientation. Evaluation results were extremely positive. Students reported that the information they received answered many questions they had about coming to college. They also reported that the career inventories helped shape their thinking about college majors and possible future careers. Others stated that the career inventory helped them reaffirm their choices of college major and vocational goals. All students reported that they appreciated the scholarship information they received through *SOURCES*.

Conclusion

This orientation process is the first phase of our retention plan. It has been well-received by students, staff, faculty, and student development professionals. The full-motion video, graphics, music, and narration provide a program that is informative and entertaining. With this technology, the possibilities for the style and magnitude of presentations are immeasurable.

Kenneth Ray, Jr., *Dean of Student Services*

Steven W. Scalabrin, *Computer Resource Coordinator*

For further information, contact the authors at Palm Beach Community College, 1977 College Drive, Belle Glade, FL 33430.

Final Performance for Final Exam

Composition instructors have long held that evaluation of their students' abilities rests on the quality of their papers, rather than on major test scores. As one who teaches both composition and speech, I believe that the same principle holds true for public speaking.

The major hurdle in speech classes is overcoming performance anxiety or stage fright. By providing as many opportunities as possible for students to "perform," their anxiety will be reduced by the end of the semester; and they will become more accomplished and confident speakers.

In the past, my final exam covered the textbook materials, and sometimes students worked in collaborative groups. However, this textbook knowledge could not measure their speaking skills.

So rather than a test, we now have a final "performance." The subject area is open, encouraging the students' to put their most creative talents on display. Within a limited time frame, they have to give a speaking performance, whether storytelling, acting, or any type of speech previously given during the semester.

This past semester I heard the best speeches ever in my experience as a speech instructor. One gentleman performed a dramatic monologue from a play. One young woman demonstrated how to make three easy and inexpensive Christmas presents. A young man gave an informative speech on dealing with the stress of finals week. A single parent read her son's favorite children's story. One student told a ghost story in a room illuminated with candles and the audience sitting in a circle on the floor.

During these speeches I observed the confidence, ease, and—dare I say it—enjoyment that this experiment provided. In the course of the semester, I plan to continue to supplement with a textbook, but as for the final exam, "the play's the thing."

Nancy Parliman Schoenewe, *Associate Professor, English*

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The Grammar of the Harlem Renaissance

When assigned to our college's Learning Skills Laboratory, it became my responsibility to tutor developmental writing students, explain computerized writing programs to students unfamiliar with them, and upgrade some developmental writing software that had become outdated. The last concern soon began to take more and more of my time. Much of the lab's material was little more than an attempt to fill computer screens with materials developed decades earlier and better suited for long-forgotten workbooks than the instruments of high technology. The software also ignored the fact that urban classrooms, as mirrors of an ethnically diverse society, required materials relating directly to African-American students, Hispanic students, Native American students—in short, large portions of the populations of today's community colleges.

Since I knew little at that time about the tools of multimedia authoring, it took a number of months and a great deal of silent, seemingly brooding concentration to produce a program that I called "The Grammar of the Harlem Renaissance." The program, in CD ROM format, showed learners excerpts from Nora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and varied the onscreen texts to create grammar drills, eliciting student interactivity while focusing on the problem of sentence fragments. It also utilized paintings by Jacob Lawrence and other period artists to illustrate Hurston's prose, and it featured recordings from Folkways Classic Jazz Anthology to accompany the grammar drills and give instruction in the music of the Harlem Renaissance.

Students seemed to love the program, but several faculty members became concerned that scanning great paintings, using Hurston's prose as material for grammar instruction, and recording Red Nichols and His Five Red Hot Pennies, may violate fair use laws, even though done for purely in-house instructional purposes. I called the legal department at Harcourt Brace College Publishing to identify the possible dangers of my efforts. The more I explained the project to them, the more interested they became. They sent a Senior Acquisitions Editor to view the work. Her visit led to a long-term working agreement, in which the publishing company contracted for four modules, two dealing with works of the Harlem Renaissance and two with Hispanic authors. The first two of these (the Zora Neale Hurston module described previously and a program using Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* to teach pronoun/antecedent agreement) will appear in January as a part of what Harcourt Brace intends to call The Culture and Grammar Series.

During the testing of the software, a process carried out on several campuses, I was occasionally questioned about the nature of the thing we were creating. Was it literature or was it grammar? Was it developmental work or cultural work? I must admit that I question the wisdom of such separations—as though Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston derived the richness of their prose from long hours with grammatical exercises! If our students are to learn grammar, they must feel it in the richness of both the oral and the written traditions that surround us. The rules governing communication are not dry bones to be examined apart from the beauty of the communicative process itself; art, music, drama, poetry, and storytelling are far more effective textbooks than are the compilations of exercise A, exercise B, etc.

We do not know what the national response to The Culture and Grammar Series will be. We anxiously await the results and are eager to create further modules. The grammar mistakes made by students around the country are only seemingly infinite, but the artworks that can be used to remedy such problems go on forever.

Joe Reese, *Instructor, Developmental Writing*

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Community Involvement Through Composition?

Students are often so overwhelmed by their roles as students, employees, and family members that they often overlook their role as citizens. Participation in community service is a means to becoming a productive citizen, so an assignment in my freshman composition classes requires research into community service. I encourage volunteer participation in an organization, preferably in the student's area of study, prior to turning in the assignment.

I invite a representative from our local volunteer resource center to visit the class and explain the needs in our community. With her help we compile a list of possible options that are not only in our community but in surrounding communities as well, and that do not require special training—homeless shelters, homes for the aged, nature centers, adult learning centers, etc.

The students select an organization that interests them and write a documented essay about it. They are required to gather information about its history, purpose, successes, volunteers, and anything else that they find of interest.

Because books have not been written about many of the organizations, the students cannot rely on the library for all their information. They have to incorporate other means of research, such as the Internet, newspapers, brochures, personal interviews, personal observations, etc.

I encourage the students (by way of extra credit) to volunteer at least five hours to this service. I do not require the volunteer work because many of the students' other roles do not leave much time for this commitment.

Both students and local organizations have provided positive feedback about the assignment. Some students have continued to volunteer even after the class was over, others have said that they see the need and want to help when they do not have so many demands on their time, and the organizations have said, "Send us more!"

While the students are developing research and composition skills, they are also learning more about the needs of their community and proving to be productive citizens.

Genie Greavu, *Assistant Professor, English*

For further information contact the author at Gainesville College, P. O. Box 1358, Gainesville, GA 30503. e-mail: GGREAVU@Hermes.GC.Peachnet.Edu

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Making Basic Composition Relevant

One of the first things I discovered in teaching basic composition to technical students was that they do not like to do two things: read and write. Consequently, the students who enroll in basic composition classes are not motivated. They enroll because they have to be there as part of a technical or vocational degree program. As a result, one of the most frequent comments I hear is, "I don't need to know how to do this (write) to twist bolts." That attitude was responsible for the changes that took place in the way I teach my basic writing classes; it also requires me to question each class so I can know what students believe to be relevant and try to work that relevance into writing assignments.

Background Information

As a rule, students in my basic composition classes have been exposed to writing classes in which they were asked to keep journals, read articles and short stories, and write essays over abstract ideas or topics which did not interest them. In addition, they were exposed to grammar taught in isolation, reading exercises, and sentence exercises which did not relate to their field of study or interests. Is it any wonder that my writing students could not see any relevance to what they were doing?

After about six weeks into the first trimester that I taught basic composition, my students balked at what they were doing and complained. One student commented, "We've just been through four years of high school and this kind of stuff, can't we do something that's useful and a little more grown-up?" Upon hearing that, I stopped the class and a lively discussion ensued about what kinds of writing these students could use. With students studying such diverse fields as air conditioning and refrigeration; culinary arts; automotive technology; diesel and heavy equipment; jewelry technology; and shoe, boot, and saddle, the common factor seemed to be business or technical writing; the other common factor, which was missing, was relevance.

My initial argument to students was that writing skills are transferable. They did not buy into that, however; and after serious consideration, neither did I. From those first discussions about relevance and the writing process, which included computer usage, came two major writing assignments: the Fact-Finding Assignment and the Mini-Business Plan. Both of these assignments are aimed at technical students and their learning about why they should be in a writing class. As a change from the typical composition assignments, students take their writing more seriously; students who do not take their writing seriously are usually those who would not take any form of writing assignment seriously. Such negatives aside, I have seen dramatic changes in students' attitudes toward writing.

Fact-Finding Assignment

Since students want relevance, I tell them to inquire within their respective departments about the types of writing they will be required to do in their degree program and on the job. They are to identify the writing they will be expected to do as they move through the ranks of a company or business.

In order to make the assignment easier for students to write and easier for me to read and evaluate, I provide a handout of a technical writing format, complete with headings and descriptions of the information to be included under each. Organization is fairly simple, but effective. Then following the technical writing format, I give students five basic headings that they must use: introduction, writing at school, writing at work, discussion, and conclusion. They may also use bulleted lists to show the types of writing they will need to do at school and work. Although most students prefer to use the headings I give, they can modify them, or write their own headings if they have information which needs to be discussed separately.

One of the most important parts of the assignment is in the discussion section. Students are to explain how they think my writing class is preparing them for what they have discovered about the forms of writing they may need to know. I tell students to critique how the class is relevant to them and their career goals and to offer suggestions for improvement.

In the conclusion section, students are to summarize the types of writing they think they need most, possible assignments, and how changing the class would benefit

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them and other students in their degree programs. Most students have definite ideas about what should be changed, and some students have even suggested different textbooks or made comments about the type of textbook they think would best suit them. All of the students who complete this assignment know that they have a better idea about what goes on in their field of study—and even if their programs do not require much writing, at least they get to write about something which is relevant to them.

The Mini-Business Plan

This writing assignment requires students to explain how they would set up their own business. This down-sized version does not go into all the details of a business plan written in a small business management class. However, it does force students to use sufficient details to explain themselves. Students follow the typical business plan format as described in small business management textbooks. Using a technical writing format, students write a statement of purpose, and describe the company, the location, the products and services they will provide, describe how they plan to market their products/services, and identify the number of people who will be employed.

As preparation for the business plan assignment, my class attends a small business management class on the day the instructor begins work on business plans. This introductory information gives my writing students a better background about the importance of a well-written plan, and hearing it from someone other than the English teacher makes more of an impression. As an added incentive, students who are enrolled in the basic composition class may use their business plans later in the small business management class; likewise, those students who are co-enrolled can use the assignment in both classes.

Computer Usage

Many basic composition students did not plan on using computers; at first, they were hesitant. By using an LCD panel and overhead projector hooked up to a computer, however, I was able to help students work their way through the basic word processing program. Once they found that they could successfully use the computers, they took their writing more seriously—certainly more seriously than before. One student commented that he had always hated writing because he was such a poor speller; but now that he could use the spell-check, he thought his ideas were much easier to put on paper. As a result, I planned extra class time on the computers and encouraged students to use the computer room in their spare time. The quality and quantity of their writing increased considerably. Response to current writing assignments was also more enthusiastic than to previous assignments which had a traditional composition focus.

Stuart Tichenor, *Instructor, General Education*

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Step Toward Success: A Team Approach to Orientation

"What outcomes do we have in mind when we think about new student orientation?" At Mayland Community College we decided on a set of five goals/outcomes. Each of these goals has been demonstrated in research and practice as essential to the success of community college orientation programs:

- Provide information about the infrastructure of the college
- Connect students with faculty and staff
- Connect students with other students
- Communicate college-level expectations
- Inspire students, giving them a willingness and eagerness to try.

We used these desired outcomes to guide us in developing the following orientation programming in hopes of realizing each of the stated goals. Our overarching intention was to weave outcome-maximizing strategies into the fabric of the orientation program, providing our students the best possible entry into their new educational experience. This preparation resulted in the Step Toward Success program.

The Program

The program began with students entering the music-filled student commons which had been preset for the five-hour orientation program. The "Quote Walls" along the entrance to the commons were covered with inspirational quotations. [The orientation team had made a campuswide call for quotations or sayings that were personally meaningful to employees and could be shared with the new students. Individuals were asked to "dress up the quote" (i.e., print it with a decorative layout) and turn it in for the quote wall.] After the students made their way through the quote-filled hallway, they were greeted by faculty and staff wearing MCC-brand attire, given an orientation packet and a name tag, and provided some refreshments.

The check-in session lasted 30 minutes, with the background music and refreshments providing a nice atmosphere for socializing. College employees involved with orientation were asked to introduce themselves and meet as many new students as possible during this time. The vice president of student services then convened the session and introduced the president, who welcomed the new students to the college. After the presidential welcome, the vice president introduced the goals for the orientation and reviewed the procedures for the next event, the informational scavenger hunt.

Students were asked to assemble in groups of 10-13 each; the grouping was guided by numbers on individual name tags. Students with common numbers assembled with faculty and student guides (assigned to each group) who were stationed around the student commons. The first goal was for the students to be introduced to these faculty members and students. The faculty and student guides then oriented the new students using the campus maps that were included in the orientation packets; then they walked the group to the first informational breakout.

Informational breakouts (11 in all) were stationed throughout the campus and led by faculty, staff, and administrators. Each breakout lasted ten minutes and was intended to provide the essential information surrounding a given topic or area and to effect the orientation goals of articulating expectations and inspirations. Informational breakouts and their leaders were:

Student to Student (led by current students talking to new students about campus life)
Career Planning and Placement (led by the director of career services)
Financial Aid (led by the coordinator of financial aid)
Job Placement/College Work-Study (led by the coordinator of employer relations)
Student Organizations (led by the current presidents of the student government association and Phi Theta Kappa)
S.O.A.R. Program (led by the director of student support services)
Bookstore (led by the bookstore director)
Study Skills and College Expectations (led by the associate vice president of academic services)
Registration (led by the registrar)
Handbook/Student Services (led by a counselor)
Library/LRC (led by the director of the LRC)

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Each breakout leader provided an informational checksheet for the student's orientation packet. The sheet had key information blanks that the students were to fill in during the breakout sessions. We realized that only the essentials could be covered in the ten minutes allotted for the session; however, we tried to communicate important basics and connect the student with a contact person and area. The checksheet provided a way to gather information and pointed the student to the essentials of any given session. After students filled in the blanks and completed the ten-minute session, the leader initialed each checksheet page.

During the breakouts, the faculty and student guides rotated forward to the next station. Each time the student groups emerged from the breakout session, they met a new faculty member and a new current student to begin the trek toward the next information session—creating even more connections to the college. This process continued until the sixth informational breakout after which the students reassembled in the student commons.

The student commons was set for lunch and again background music was playing to encourage even more social interaction. Near the conclusion of the Pizza Hut and Arizona Iced Tea-sponsored lunch, the groups were reassembled for the remaining (five) informational breakouts. The students grouped with faculty and student guides who once more led them to their respective informational breakouts.

After the final breakout session, the large group convened in the student commons for the closing session. Orientation team members were waiting at the door to welcome the students back and to check the initials on student orientation packets as they entered the room. Students with initials on all checksheets—which signified that they had gathered all the necessary information—were asked to place their name tags in a large bag to be used in drawing the names of prizewinners. In the closing session, the prizes were awarded (e.g., dinners for two at local restaurants, a special parking space, MCC clothing) and a closing message delivered, "Steps Along the Pathway to Possibility." This was a 20-minute, motivational, steps-to-success type of message meant to wrap up the orientation with a BANG! After this final message, we again reminded the students of the orientation goals. We asked the students to take out four post-it notes that we had inserted in their packets and use them to tell us how we did and what we could do better. We asked the students to place these post-its on an evaluation wall that was located on the way out of the student commons. Once the orientation program was complete, we encouraged students to meet with faculty in different program areas and to contact the leaders of the breakouts to gather more information.

Outcomes

We had no negative comments about the orientation process—even after a five-hour program! Some of our favorite comments were:

- "You really boosted my confidence! Believe me, I really needed it; my confidence was really low."
- "Very caring."
- "This orientation was very helpful and I had fun! Thanks for coordinating such a wonderful day."
- "I can tell a lot of hard work was put into this. Thanks so much. The program was very interesting, organized, and exciting."
- "What a nice way to greet new students! Thank you for making us feel wanted and respected. I believe I'm going to love being a student here!"

The orientation team (a cross-section of staff, faculty, and continuing students) devoted time and effort to this program, striving to design and deliver the most effective orientation possible. We were committed to creating a value-added orientation process resulting in students being well-prepared to begin their studies. We are currently planning (1) a cohort performance study and (2) mid-semester and post-semester focus groups to collect data about students who completed orientation and to determine/ask how well the orientation prepared them for MCC studies. Initial reports from faculty include comments about how well-prepared the orientation students are when compared to the non-orientation students during the first few days of class. We are refining this program and moving toward required orientation.

Mark Milliron, *Associate Director, League for Innovation in the Community College; former Vice President of Student Services at Mayland Community College*

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"Education Should not be a Preparation For Life; It Should be Life"

...so one of my students began his speech. Sounds like a nice idea, I thought. But how could one possibly implement that philosophy in a speech course? There are so many skills to master in public speaking, so many classroom speeches to give, that a quarter disappears in little more than two um's and an uh.

On a college campus with a newfound interest in community involvement, public relations, and marketing of programs, however, there is a niche. How about using students in public speaking classes as public relations interns for the college?

Highline Community College offers a special public speaking course designed for creative and competent students who intend to pursue future activities or careers that demand presentational leadership and impression management. As a prerequisite, students take the basic speech course or have special experience in public presentations. They must commit to a schedule that telescopes text material and topic research into little more than six weeks, leaving almost four weeks for real-world immersion.

In the first six weeks, students cover the same text material as in a standard public speaking course, chapter by chapter, creating specific personal goals for their own presentations and completing their work with a mastery exam. At the same time they research the college, collecting data, interviewing course instructors and program directors, and publishing an anthology of feature articles about them.

After these first weeks of intense preparation, they are ready to craft their speeches. The topic is Highline Community College. The purpose is persuasive, either to persuade prospective students to attend or to persuade community groups and local legislators to support higher education funding. During these final few weeks of the quarter, students venture out in pairs, speaking at four or five venues each. Audiences vary: area high schools; school assemblies; GED programs; Rotary, Soroptimist, and Kiwanis groups; political district meetings; and state legislators.

In any public speaking course, we hope to teach not only competent presentation skills but also critical thinking. At issue is not simply speaking with varied pitch and extended eye contact, but perusing a mass of information in order to select the data that will be most influential and interesting to a particular audience. That is the educational challenge presented to all public speaking instructors. Yet the artificiality of college students crafting speeches only for college audiences often interferes with the breadth and depth of critical thinking we would like to promote.

This Highline Community College Public Speaking / Public Relations course escapes this dilemma. Students are so sensitive to differences in audiences that they often drop by schools or community meetings before their scheduled speaking engagement just to get a feel for the demographics and atmosphere, or even to administer a questionnaire. They work as teams, sharing tidbits of information and videotaping and critiquing each other to a point of near-perfection.

The end result of this innovative course is what one might call win / win / win. Students develop both thinking and presentation skills that far exceed their goals. The instructor, while spending hours scheduling the off-campus speaking opportunities, has the distinct pleasure of working with students who display exceptional skill and continually motivate themselves and each other. And the college sends out into the community ambassadors who can "pitch the programs" more effectively than any public relations campaign. Win / win / win.

Barbara Clinton, *Instructor, Speech*

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A Simple Way to Encourage Proofreading

Instructors are frustrated when student essays present cogent reasoning marred by poor grammar or clumsy writing. No field of study welcomes writers with such bad habits as using "should of" instead of "should have," misspelling common words, or cramming convoluted sentences with needless jargon. Reading bad writing is laborious, and correcting it seems to do no good, as the same errors crop up in the next assignment. Docking points alerts students to the problem, but does not solve it.

Good writers fix bad writing before they submit it. Students who submit bad work should learn to proofread. A simple two-step method works to get them started:

1. Use a highlighter to illuminate mistakes or awkward phrases.
2. Offer extra credit for correcting the highlighted mistakes.

A lime-green highlighter is easy to see and see through. Each "green line" is worth two points, one to the writer and one to whomever helps the writer fix the mistake. I urge students with numerous highlighted words to be generous and let others help them.

This method is simple and encourages good learning habits. No time is wasted on deciphering what somebody meant to write, deciding how it ought to have been written, and scribbling corrections in the margins of garbled prose. There is no need to highlight every mistake, just those that are most annoying. If a paper has numerous mistakes, highlight only the first page.

The highlighting method is specific. Highlighting focuses student attention on errors that keep students from getting their ideas across. There is no debating the need to learn. On the contrary, most students appreciate the chance to rid their work of flaws that might embarrass them in professional life. In addition, with no risk and with a real prospect of reward, students find this approach non-threatening. Fixing mistakes looks simple.

Highlighting encourages students to look at their papers. Many instructors can testify to the discouraging experience of reading stacks of papers, editing and commenting with care, only to have students throw them in the trash after a quick glance at the grade. A paper with "green lines" that stand for points, on the other hand, will be saved and reworked.

In addition, this method gets students talking about their work. One might not think of grammar as an ice-breaker, but the point system makes an error-filled paper a thing of value, encouraging students to give and ask for help. In addition, grammar is a neutral topic. People who barely nodded to their classmates all term seem to feel no hesitation to lean across the row and ask questions. Soon, one student is reading the sentence aloud, another is looking in a dictionary, and somebody remarks, "I see your point in this sentence, but doesn't it go against what the book said in Chapter __?" Discussion of course content ensues.

In English classes, time may be set aside for error-correction. It may be feasible to match up stronger and weaker writers, or informally point them out to each other. Students for whom English is a second language may land at either extreme of the writing-ability spectrum, or even both. Some have taken many grammar classes and are crack editors, even if their own writing seems impossible to read. Matching one of these students with a native speaker who has never thought about grammar but can identify what "sounds right" can create a valuable teaching and learning experience for both.

In other subject areas, it is a good idea to hand back highlighted papers at the end of class. Do not be surprised if students linger and go to work on their writing at once. Few can resist the lure of specific, simple, relevant lessons.

Sara Greenwald, *Instructor, English*

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Undergraduate Student Research: An Approach to Improving Student Critical Thinking

Many college instructors lament that students do not work logically through problems. Instructors at each rung of the educational ladder blame this deficiency on those on the rung below until only the students and their parents remain. Wherever the problem lies within the system, instructors in every discipline have an obligation to improve students' reasoning skills. But they can expect to face one or more of these problems.

- Students have not been trained or have forgotten the basic procedures needed to recognize a problem, collect adequate information, and derive logical conclusions.
- Students and instructors can be impatient and want immediate results. Developing reasoning skills in students can be a time-consuming, frustrating process. Your investments may not be realized immediately and will be sustained only if students receive continual reinforcement through the rest of their educational careers.
- Many instructors will have to change the way they teach. The old comfortable techniques may have to be modified in order to try an approach with unknown results and risk the possibility of making mistakes.

Framework for Problem Solving

An introductory science course where the principles of the scientific method can be performed easily through experimentation is an ideal place to introduce a comprehensive program to train students in the proper techniques of problem solving. The scientific method provides students with a logical framework to investigate and solve problems. The steps in this process are:

1. *Problem identification*: Students must be taught to be observant and to ask "why?" when they do not understand an observation.
2. *Collection of background information on identified problem*: Students must learn about resources available to investigate a problem and how to utilize them efficiently.
3. *Formulation of a hypothesis*: Students must be taught how to use the background information they have collected to develop an educated guess as to the outcome of the observed problem.
4. *Testing of the hypothesis*: Students must be taught how to design an experiment to test their hypothesis.
5. *Unbiased evaluation of experimental data*: After students complete their experiment, they must be taught how to analyze their data and draw logical conclusions.

Students must realize that if their experiment fails to support their hypothesis, they must be flexible enough to revise their hypothesis and/or redesign their experiment and try again.

Working Model

Within the sciences, many students have been conditioned to expect that an experiment can be completed within two to three hours and that it will always work. These expectations are far from reality in the scientific world where answers to simple questions may take years and millions of dollars to solve. To assist students in developing an appreciation for scientific research, acquiring problem-solving skills, and preparing for transfer to upper-division courses, the biology department at Darton College requires all students enrolled in General Biology to participate in a student research project. Each student uses a computerized work station connected to the Local Area Network (LAN) to assist with literature retrieval, data analysis, and scientific report writing. As a pre- and/or corequisite for General Biology, all students are required to enroll in a microcomputer orientation course that trains them to use a word processing and spreadsheet program.

Each research project lasts approximately nine weeks. Instructors provide students with information regarding the project during lecture and laboratory. During the course of the quarter, only one three-hour laboratory for setting up the experiment is dedicated to the project. In order for students to complete their projects, they must organize their time to work on their projects after they finish their formal laboratory for the week or at another time when the laboratory is open.

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During the first quarter of General Biology, the research librarian and course instructor train students to retrieve scientific references using an on-line computer network, a CD-ROM computerized database, and a scientific index. After students have been trained in literature retrieval, they are assigned a research problem and work in teams of two to assemble a bibliography. The bibliography is submitted to the instructor on a floppy disk for review. The submission on floppy disk ensures that each team is able to use the word-processing program for the project. After the instructor approves each bibliography, each team collects appropriate references and uses the computerized work station in the biology laboratory to write the research proposal. Each proposal includes a statement of the problem, literature review, hypothesis, and a complete materials and methods section, including method of data analysis. The proposal is submitted to the instructor for editing. Edited papers are then returned to each team of students for revision. Revised papers are resubmitted to the instructor for evaluation.

Students can now set up and perform their experiment. After the completion of the experiment, each team must statistically analyze its experimental data using a statistical program on the LAN. Each team prepares a results and discussion section for its project. This section of the project is submitted to the instructor for editing. Edited papers are returned to each team of students for revision. Each team then assembles its entire research report for evaluation by the instructor.

During the second quarter, students utilize and build on the research skills they developed during the first quarter. Research projects for the second quarter require students to work individually on a problem that they select. At the end of this quarter, each student presents his/her project in the form of a poster session.

Michael Stoy, *Professor, Biology; Chair, Science and Mathematics Division*

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Computers as Scientific Instruments

At Fort Scott Community College we asked ourselves these questions: (1) Would the extensive use of computers as scientific and computational tools in the chemistry laboratory, and not in a separate room, make the laboratory more interesting and relevant? and (2) How would students react to such a laboratory? Consequently, we made an application to the National Science Foundation, Department of Undergraduate Education, Instrumentation and Laboratory Improvement program. Its funding, with local matching funds, provided $44,000 to purchase computers, balances, spectrophotometers, software, and networking and interface hardware for a completely interfaced freshman general chemistry laboratory.

Six stations in a 24-student lab are now equipped with state-of-the-art computers interfaced to milligram digital balances, digital pH meters, and digital visible spectrophotometers. Computers are loaded with Windows 95; Microsoft Excel, a spreadsheet program; Wedge for Windows, a bridge program for interfacing; Scientific WorkPlace, a word processor that includes the algebra program Maple; and HyperChem, a molecular modeling program. Four identically equipped computers on rolling tables but without the interfaced instrumentation are also available for student use in the laboratory.

Depending upon the laboratory exercise of the day, students work in cooperative groups or as individuals. When working as individuals each student uses a different page on the spreadsheet. Initially, the bridge program is set to accept data from the balance. The student simply presses the print key on the balance, and the data appear in the active cell of the spreadsheet. In later exercises students learn to configure the bridge program for a particular instrument and take advantage of some of its capabilities. For example, students were successfully able to program the computer to ignore the first three output characters from a spectrophotometer, print the next three in a column labeled "wavelength," move the active cell to the right, ignore two more and then print five in a column labeled "absorbance," ignore remaining characters, and move the cursor down and to the left, ready to start again on the next line with a new wavelength reading. This all happens with a single depression of the print button on the spectrophotometer!

Instruction on the use of computers was on a need-to-know basis. In the first computer exercise the computer was used as a typewriter. Students without spreadsheet experience used pocket calculators for calculations. As time went on, students received tips and tools from other students and the instructor.

Compared to previous traditional laboratory classes, there was a noticeable change in the attitude of students. Students spent more time in the laboratory and were more involved in the process but perceived the laboratory to be easier. Groups worked together better, and there was more cooperation between groups. Students with computer experience became instructors, as did those with prior background in chemistry. When a group including the college president, three deans, and the Kansas State Commissioner of Education visited the laboratory, students were visibly offended by the interruption. The commissioner observed, "I am convinced that your integrated approach to learning will not only make more sense to your students but will result in your students being more intrinsically motivated to learn."

In an evaluation questionnaire completed by 34 students on the last day of class, 72% had not used computers in previous chemistry classes. Four of five had previous computer classes. Only 29% were frightened by the use of computers. Fully 91% felt the computers made the laboratory more interesting.

Over 79% felt the computers made the *laboratory* more relevant, and 88% felt the laboratory made *computers* more relevant. None thought that too much time was spent on computer instruction, 71% thought it was about right, and the remaining 29% would have preferred more computer instruction.

In one of the most telling evaluations, students were asked: Knowing what you know now, if you had a choice between otherwise identical chemistry courses with or without computerized labs, which would you choose? A large majority, 79%, said they would choose a computerized lab. Only 6% preferred a non-computerized lab; the remaining 15% felt it made no difference.

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One criticism that is frequently made of this program is that the computers do the computations for the students and they do not learn the math. It should be pointed out that to do the computations on the computer, the student must tell the computer what computations to make, after translating them from mathematical symbolism. Thus, doing the computations on the computer is a higher level thinking activity than using a pocket calculator. Also, in each experiment students were asked to do sample calculations using Scientific WorkPlace. Students were then asked, Did the computers keep you from learning the lab math? Only 9% answered yes. The remaining 91% answered no; one student commented that the computers helped.

The program was initiated fall 1996. Our prior experience was an incomplete pilot run for three semesters. Thus, our experience is limited. We are not a large school; the number of students affected to date is small. However, we do feel that the experience has been positive and offer this description as a preliminary progress report.

Howard A. Kivett, *Instructor of Chemistry*

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Women's Support Services

Women's Support Services (WSS) at Houston Community College System offers educational and social services for displaced homemakers, divorcees, single mothers, and socially and/or economically disadvantaged women. Training includes occupational and vocational instruction in addition to academic transfer preparatory coursework. WSS encourages certificate or associate degree completion; however, women are welcome in the program if they desire only to upgrade job skills.

WSS offers a variety of free seminars for both potential and currently enrolled students. These seminars relate to career counseling, job interview skills, resumé preparation, community social services, parenting, mental health issues, study skills, financial planning, legal assistance, and other topics of general interest to women. Personal, group, and academic counseling sessions are also provided. Peer mentors are assigned to new members, and free academic tutoring services are available. Community leaders and experts in selected business fields are featured in monthly seminars and provide a working network of professional contacts. Receptions are held as program introductions and as public acknowledgment of accomplishments.

Financial scholarships for tuition and books are awarded regularly to qualified women. Subsidized partial payments to the child care center of a WSS mother's choice provide child care assistance. Free city bus tokens are given to those in need of public transportation. Other resources for WSS members include job placement services and a lending library of textbooks and general interest books.

Publication of program information within the college and in the general community is critical. Mass mailouts to selected geographical areas in the city are useful. In addition to printed and audio-visual advertisements, regular contact is made with community organizations, governmental agencies, churches, and other networking institutions to establish business relationships and serve as resources for program referrals, speaker networks, and potential contacts. Board of trustees members are selected from local businesses and attend monthly meetings.

Suggested variation

One significant variation in 1991 was to include men in the target population. The program is now called "Support Services" (SS); however, few men have yet to participate actively.

Estelle S. Jeu, *Graduate Student, Community College Leadership Program*

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Unlocking the Motivation, the Desire, and the Joy to Learn!

It all began when I wondered what it would be like to teach a college-level class that would begin by helping students identify the different ways that they are "smart" and providing students learning choices and options utilizing different "intelligences."

The Multiple Intelligences (MI) Pilot Study

Fascinated with Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, I offered an introductory psychology class incorporating his theory—originally developed with children in mind—for college students. The different intelligences include being "smart" in the following ways: words, numbers and computers, body and movement, music and rhythm, people, and self. During the first class session, I administered a multiple intelligences pictorial inventory to help students identify dominant or preferred intelligences, which intelligences "led their parade" and which ones followed. In addition, the syllabus indicated, "Just as choices and options are part of real life, you will be presented with various learning options from which to select and succeed in learning the content of this class. These choices are based on your different intelligences."

By the looks on students' faces, I am sure they were thinking, "Is this guy for real? He's going to give us options? What about all those things I'm used to? Where do I go to drop this class? I want my money back. Must be some weird psychologist going off the deep end!"

As I shared my philosophy of the teaching/learning process with the students, I indicated I was not interested in "how SMART you are; I'm interested in HOW you're smart." I reviewed my fairly traditional syllabus—an outline of what was to be covered, tests, homework assignments, and the evaluation/grading policy. The major difference in this class was that students had choices as to how they could learn the content of the class: article reviews, paper/pencil tests, book reports, computer simulations, collages, sculptures, creative dance, acting, poetry, and musical/rhythmic application. All of this sounded like a novel idea to some students but scary to most! I assured them we would be taking risks together.

Options Grounded in Academic Content

The learning options incorporated reading and understanding of key terms, concepts, and ideas of the material being covered. In class discussions, students took the lead in explaining what and how they were learning the material. The learning options became a bonus. Once students understood the material in the traditional way, they could elect to be as creative as they wanted! Upon completion of the learning option or "homework" assignment, students submitted an in-depth, written, reflective evaluation of what they had accomplished.

Results and Implications of the Study

The two-year MI pilot study (10 classes; 131 students) is over. Analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data has revealed some intriguing results:

1. **Assessment of Different Intelligences**

Twenty-seven percent of the students identified themselves as bodily/kinesthetic/movement learners. They need opportunities to move and act things out. They respond to a classroom that provides manipulatives—movement, hands-on-learning experiences. They want to "do" psychology. In the 18-21 age group, 30% selected this mode as their top choice; in the 22-30 age group, 32%; in the 30+ age group, 12%. Twenty-four percent of the students identified themselves as interpersonal learners. They enjoy being around other people, prefer social activities, and learn best by relating and participating in cooperative learning groups. In the 18-21 group, 19% selected this mode as their top choice; in the 22-30 group, 29%; in the 30+ group, 29%. Eight percent of the students identified themselves as verbal/linguistic learners. They enjoy dealing with words and language—written and spoken. They enjoy reading and writing, have highly developed auditory skills, like to play word games, and are often able to spell words accurately and easily. In the 18-21 age group, 5% selected this mode as their top choice; in the 22-30 group, 3%; in the 30+ group, 19%. Eight percent of the students identified themselves as logical/mathematical/reasoning learners. They learn by abstracting, reasoning, categorizing, working with numbers and computers, and doing

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activities in sequential order. They like mathematics, like to experiment and test things they do not understand. They feel most comfortable "coloring within the lines." In the 18-21 age group, 7% selected this mode as their top choice; in the 22-30 age group, 7%; in the 30+ age group, 15%.

2. **Final grades**

A = 57%
B = 24%
C = 14%
D = 4%
F = 0%

3. **Time Spent Outside of Class Reading/Studying/ Learning/Working on/or Thinking About the Material**

Students spent an average of 11.4 hours a week on course-related activities outside of class.

4. **Learner Motivation and the Joy of Learning**

Learning theorists advocate students considering their learning and thinking more consciously (or metacognitively). The written component of self-reflection that I had built into the curriculum produced some invaluable, illuminating, and transformational insights for me. Inviting students to comment on their own learning challenges them to think about what they completed and why, and to justify why they selected a particular learning option. A most revealing comment came from an 18-year-old male student:

> "My motivation to learn psychology was greatly increased by having the options that I did. I could finally learn my way. I actually found myself looking forward to doing school work. I must have something wrong with me, that's not supposed to happen. As I was going through the chapter reading new terms, pictures of things that reminded me of them would be popping into my head. I actually didn't dread doing the projects like I do in other classes."

Some Final Thoughts

College students will take risks with different ways of learning when they are invited and encouraged to do so. If they are provided creative choices and options in applying HOW they are smart, their motivation, level of creativity, and desire will go beyond teacher and learner expectations.

René Díaz-Lefebvre, *Professor, Psychology*

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Empowering Students: Experimenting with Quality Control

End-of-the-semester student evaluations of faculty occur too late to be of any use to students (if faculty members use student suggestions to improve). Using quality control groups composed of student volunteers who meet with the instructor after *each* class eliminates that problem and allows an ongoing feedback system to exist between instructor and students.

In the fall 1996 semester, I taught six classes and used five of them to experiment with this quality control system (the final class ended at 10:10 p.m., not a good time to convince students to stay longer). I announced the concept to each group and invited volunteers to meet after class in my office for five minutes (longer if the *students* chose to remain). Class sizes varied from 12 to 39 students, and from two to eight students volunteered from each class. Female students comprised 50-100% of each group. Three classes were introductory courses in sociology; another dealt with social problems and another with nursing. All were freshman/sophomore-level courses.

To determine whether students actually preferred the idea, I announced reminders during for the first four class sessions only. In every class, the quality control group continued to meet even after my announcements had ended. Once, during an unexpected cold snap, I was detained in the classroom answering student questions. As I walked toward my office I discovered all seven quality control group members shivering in the outside hallway, fully 10 minutes after the class had ended; every member had chosen to wait.

Students frequently complain (correctly) that they are given little or no power in controlling their scholastic destiny. The quality control group provides some of the missing control. Implicit in the system, of course, is the instructor's willingness to address grievances.

During the first three to five sessions, I guided the discussion, asking for student input, discussing student-driven issues, and correcting my behavior and/or changing techniques to improve lesson delivery. We discussed fairness and reasonable behavior from the students as well as improvements for the instructor. Students frequently complained about the behavior of other students. Those complaints were then addressed and discussed in the classroom. Within two weeks, the quality control group had become the voice of the class, with nonparticipating students contacting members with suggestions or questions.

Each group developed a personality of its own and met its own needs. After the first few sessions, I only had to say, "Talk to me." All major problems would be discussed quickly, and conversation would turn to every topic of imaginable interest to the students, ranging from how to survive the GRE (in a freshman class!) to strategies for choosing a four-year university. One group chose to disband at mid-semester because we had solved all of the problems and the students no longer felt the group was important. The other four continued to meet until the end of the semester.

Although I had promised not to keep the students longer than five minutes, *they* usually extended the discussion to 15 minutes or longer. Students were excited about a chance to control their own destiny. They appreciated an opportunity to express their feelings in a safe, supportive environment.

The experiment was a complete success. The students felt (and were) empowered, the quality of my delivery improved, and a sense of rapport developed and rapidly spread to the other students. I must stress, however, that a key ingredient was my willingness to be open to student complaints and suggestions, to discuss problems frankly and honestly, and to take necessary action to alter my behavior and methods. The result benefited all participants.

Bill Lockhart, *Instructor, Sociology*

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ESL: A Theatrical Approach

English as a Second Language (ESL) students face several obstacles: the language itself, formation of words, accents, intonations, gestures, and non-verbal interactions in everyday conversations. Vocal Production for the Stage, a theatre course designed in cooperation with our ESL program, addresses these obstacles. In a theatre setting we can teach an American to speak and gesture as someone from another country, a different region of America, or ethnic background, so why not put the process in reverse? The spring 1997 semester is the first offering of this new course, so the process is in evolution; but the approach is novel and holds promise.

At the beginning of class, the students go through the same vocal, facial, and other physical warm-ups that our theatre students do for acting. As a gesture of respect and a spirit of exchange, I ask students to teach me to pronounce their names correctly and to extend a greeting or salutation in their native languages. This role reversal gives students a boost in confidence and an active role in the learning experience. We begin working in slow motion on phonemes and the various mouth and facial positions required to produce them, word and sentence drills, and improvised dialog where they portray English-speaking characters in real-life situations, focusing on accents, gestures, and facial expressions.

I recruit American students to participate in this class because they and the ESL students can benefit from the experience. This cooperative effort is an attempt to expose ESL students to more real-world situations and less laboratory-like ideal interactions. American students get unique opportunities to benefit from the vocal training, embark on an "international journey," and provide leadership in the learning process.

It is clear from our experiences thus far that this course should require a prerequisite of traditional ESL vocabulary and language training, and should be divided into beginning and intermediate levels, with the upper levels focusing on the subtleties of human interaction.

The nature of the course and the togetherness we develop in the classroom will provide several benefits. First, students will develop the confidence to stand before an audience; second, class experiences may help reduce the fear and mistrust between our American and ESL students.

A sequel to the vocal production course has been planned for the fall 1997 semester. This course will be available to the intermediate and advanced students, or those who have completed the vocal production course. It will focus on developing interpersonal interaction, on learning to read body language and facial expressions, and on analyzing and portraying a character's personality traits based on verbal or written descriptions. It will culminate in a demonstration or mini-production by the ESL students displaying some of the concepts and skills acquired in this course and the vocal production course.

To date, responses from both the ESL and American students have been overwhelmingly positive. We may have transformed a traditionally painful and difficult process into something exciting and fun. Enrollment has been high, and waiting lists are growing daily.

Shirley R. Ewing, *Academic Program Coordinator of Theatre*

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I Hate to Read

Research confirms that a central component of breaking through the remedial wall is to get students to read. Without the ability to read, students have no pathway to progress and success. Language is at the core of academic study, and it is not surprising that many poor readers disappear. So when, without a trace of guilt or with an odd sense of pride, a student announces a distaste for reading, I know I have my work cut out for me.

But I relish this instructional challenge. I want to get dedicated non-readers to pick up a book and to develop a long-lasting enthusiasm about language and reading. In my basic communications class, I use a multi-layer program to achieve this objective.

Layer I—Reading Seminar

One class period per week is devoted to the Reading Seminar. In preparation, students must select and read an article, prepare a synopsis, identify three vocabulary words, and be prepared to make a short oral presentation. At first, students are able to select any article from any source. The only requirement is that they cannot be bored by what they have chosen.

On Reading Seminar days, I select three students to give a short oral presentation and discuss their selected vocabulary. I assign two students to be special listeners and develop two questions to ask the presenter. Students cooperatively learn the process of interacting and engaging in communication. Predictably, there are always *People* and *Sports Illustrated* stories; but sometimes students start exploring other publications on their own. After a few weeks, I ask them to read an article from a periodical that is unfamiliar to them—but again they must be interested in the material. This is a gradual way of introducing students to the world of ideas in print, building on students' self-motivation and sense of discovery.

Then, I bring students to the Learning Resource Center to investigate journals and periodicals. Students discover periodicals devoted to career interests, recreation, or—*mirabile dictu*—ideas. Sometimes the most reluctant and "anti-academic" students find their way to the library and even get a library card.

Layer II—The Novel

I believe that students who find themselves in remedial courses have been shortchanged in their imaginative lives, particularly by their lack of experience with fiction. So, I have my students read three novels during the semester. They can choose the first novel, without any judgment from me as to whether or not it is "good literature."

The second I choose—something manageable with a clear plot line, and we read it as a group. The third novel must be chosen from a list of 40 titles that I supply. Here the choices reflect more challenging literature written by well-regarded authors. By this time, students have read and responded to reading in their writing and oral presentation. They are confident and more open to the reading experience, they feel a great sense of accomplishment, and they see themselves as "real" students rather than as academic castaways.

Layer III—The Special Event

In addition to breaking the reading barrier, I want students to break free of the classroom. So three times during the semester I take my students to a special event—an off-campus experience with Boston's artistic or cultural events. For example, with support from a grant that underwrites students' expenses, my students have attended the Museum of Science, The Museum of Fine Arts, and productions of *Shear Madness, Bang the Drum Slowly, Dream Girls,* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.* Students are required to attend and can invite friends, parents, partners, and children. It is interesting to meet students' families, and students seem to enjoy introducing them to me and their fellow students.

In preparation for the special event, students conduct research, find articles, and report their findings. They feel special participating in these events; they know from other courses that instructors and students do not customarily spend their after-class free time together. The Special Events establish a powerful sense of community; the students and I enjoy sharing these culturally exciting experiences together.

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Layer IV—Writing

One might ask—when do you teach writing? Actually, I teach it all the time. My emphasis is not on teaching writing in a new and different way; the suggestions incorporated in current practice and theory, commonly referred to as the writing process, seem to work. Rather, my energy and effort are directed at giving students something novel, unusual, and imaginative *to write about*. They write about the articles they read for the reading seminar; they write in response to the three novels; they write in response to the special events.

When students are engaged in active learning, when they are making choices, when they are having out-of-the-ordinary experiences, there can be an explosive reaction. My students no longer find themselves sitting at the back of the educational bus. Rather, they see themselves as students—with the ability to enter educational doors that not only were shut to them before, but that they did not know were even there.

Philip Sbaratta, *Instructor, English*

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Thirty-Five Minute Investments

The "Thirty-Five Minute Investment" opens communications between students and teacher on the first day. Students are the center of attention; the teacher begins with a walk-about, shaking hands and welcoming as many students as possible within the first ten minutes.

As the teacher walks about the room, a handout is passed to students. It instructs students to move about and ask questions. It initiates nonverbal forms of communication: smiling, looking at other students, and shaking hands. Students must also write out answers to questions posed on the handout. Questions are need-based and can vary according to discipline. Questions for writing or literature classes, for example, might include: Who can help edit or type essays? Who wants to form study groups? Who enjoys or wants help with reading and writing assignments?

This activity for students is scheduled for 20 minutes, but may not be completed within that time; however, it initiates conversation and responses. Stopping these conversations will be difficult because students enjoy the opportunity to talk with and seek help from other students and the teacher. In the remaining five minutes, students write responses to two questions written on the board: Was this activity meaningful? Why? The written response is their "exit slip" from the class. The "exit slip" provides information about students' personal needs, writing skills, ideas for future lesson plans, and class attendance for the first day. Students have written about how they chose students to talk to, what they said, how they looked at and listened to others, and how they remembered names.

After this initial investment, students will have identified several resources, in addition to the teacher: study / writing groups, access to computer assistance, and in-class tutors. They have heard that others have concerns about writing and teacher expectations. They have learned about approaching others.

Students and teacher have moved out of their traditional spaces and explored how to communicate orally and in writing. They have experienced collaborative learning, identified new resources, and fueled the desire to return for the next class.

Minnie Collins, *Instructor, Humanities*

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So, What do You Want, Anyway?

Objective exams are very seductive when we are working our way out of a pile of blue books. Although we know good essay questions prompt valuable insights into what our students actually know or do not know, writing responses to student answers chews up time. Yet, after we scribble in margins to explain weaknesses and point out strengths, after we hack at lumps in grammar / usage, after we do our best to individualize, too often the students will say, "I still don't see what you want!" So, where's the payoff for our efforts? Where's the payoff for students' efforts?

I tried an alternative to margin scribbling: a simple score-by-points system, further supported by one- or two-word comments. The simple score-by-points system was clean, fast, and empirical. But the howl from many remained, "So what do you want, anyway?" Students were rarely satisfied with my responses to that question, and so they usually repeated the same mistakes.

When I added one more step to the score-by-points system, the real payoff emerged. I had learned to scan all the student answers to each question before I assigned number values to help me get a feel for the level of understanding and writing demonstrated by a particular group. This opportunity to rub a "class standard" against my own standard helped the process of evaluation. So one afternoon a few years ago, I placed a fresh test sheet alongside the stack of answers. As I processed answers, I wrote the name(s) of the student(s) who earned the most points beside the appropriate question on the test sheet, creating a list of students who wrote the best answers.

But I still had to decide what to do with my list. I did not like any of the alternatives because they all took time. Then I found a method that took less time than margin scribbling and had a greater payoff for me and the students. I already used the word processor as a tool to record and print out my comments for student projects in speech, acting, and writing classes. Most students respond well to this since there is an ethos of the individual printout that has yet to become ordinary to students. This process also allows me to record the progress of my responses to each student's work. So, this time I opened the essay test document—for example, test2.doc—and immediately did a "Save as" with a "k" added to the title (for "key") so test2.doc became test2k.doc. Using a slightly different font, I transcribed the best answer(s) below the question, and added the initials of the author(s) at the end of each. I had created a "Student Written Key" (SWK). Then I made copies for the class. The transcriptions were not edited, so [sic] appeared occasionally.

I discovered the payoffs to the SWK and some flaws which I have since remedied.

- No one asks, "So what do you want?" anymore because at least one successful answer for each question is provided. And a fellow student wrote it.
- When I hear, "Well, I said the same thing!" I ask the student to read her / his answer and let the class respond.
- "What does [sic] mean?" has been a perfect segue into discussing the importance of language usage, spelling, and proofreading outside the English classroom, or "your good ideas deserve better packaging."
- There is often a new respect and pride within the class. The evidence of their own success is in front of them all and is being acknowledged.
- The pressure is toward emulating the successful rather than joining any stubborn and vocal complainers.
- Students sometimes admit surprise that I actually read the answers.
- Others are impressed that I take the time to create the answer "key." (I don't reveal that it takes a lot less time than the old margin scribbling.)
- My impulse to share especially fine answers without putting too much of a shine on particular students is satisfied.
- The next round of essay answers are usually much improved.

By doing this, it appeared I had created a monster of precedence. Was I to create an SWK for every essay exam from now on? No, I would not provide an SWK for every essay exam; students were instructed to learn from the current example and go forward.

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Also, I learned to begin testing at the beginning of the term with fewer questions. Creating the SWK for a two- or three-question exam is a relative snap, and the payoff is the same as for longer tests. Later in the term, with the convention established, I again use the SWK:

- to show student examples of how different responses to the same question can be "correct" when the answers are supported with citations, etc.,
- to show that succinct answer can still be a complete answer, and
- to show the value of inventiveness and creative synthesis of ideas.

I can usually use an answer from each student sometime during the quarter. The less probing or challenging questions are good territory in which to find an answer written by a struggling student who can use the lift that acknowledgment provides.

I still scribble in margins. Direct contact with paper is still a personal need. But I have not heard "What do you want, anyway?" for a long time.

David C. Estrem, *Associate Professor, Theatre/Speech*

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Empowering the Re-Entry Student: The Second Chance Program

The Second Chance program at San Antonio College (TX) seeks to recruit women who can benefit from retraining and help them become self-sufficient, contributing members of society. A significant number of single parents, displaced homemakers, and single, pregnant women reside in housing projects. Few have skills to alter their socioeconomic status.

Affordable, quality child care and housing are major challenges for students from this population. Second Chance reaches out to the housing projects in order to deliver courses in a familiar environment. Selected college courses are taught on location and help students avoid typical transportation problems. Individualized counseling (which includes support services to address these issues) often makes the difference between success and failure for re-entry women. Counselors help students locate child care, textbooks, and transportation.

The program facilitates the collaboration of several academic and service agencies through an informal network of community-based organizations—e.g., the San Antonio Housing Authority Family and Self-Sufficiency Program is an integral part of the recruitment process and provides facilities in the housing projects. Key personnel include a program counselor, part-time mentor / tutor, and two part-time clerks.

Students are offered a tailored curriculum and a comprehensive support system. Students' educational skills are assessed, and Individual Development (ID) plans are created. The ID identifies the primary academic, personal, and student support interventions, as well as any other assistance the participant needs to achieve her academic goals.

College courses are held during a variety of day, evening, and weekend hours. Mandatory weekly self-assessment and tutoring services are unique features of the program; they ensure that students and teachers are well-informed about the rate and quality of academic progress. In this experience-based program, students

- learn about the necessary academic preparation for entry into college,
- learn how to access and apply for college and financial aid,
- experience cultural and self-awareness through role models and lectures which increase motivation and support academic retention,
- have direct contact with counselors and, if recruited through San Antonio Family Self-Sufficiency, receive housing assistance.

The Second Chance program focuses on leaving students better than it found them. Its goal is to transform its students into productive members of their families and their communities.

Olga Flores Garcia, *Graduate Student, Community College Leadership Program*

For further information contact the author at The University of Texas at Austin, SZB 348, Austin, TX 78712-1293.

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Making Tests More User-Friendly

We can facilitate learning by designing user-friendly tests. Increasing numbers of students with learning disabilities are entering higher education; many are not identified as learning disabled and struggle to negotiate traditional instruction. But good testing practices, along with a few simple innovations, can make a difference for *all* students.

Pay Attention to Format

•Type tests rather than writing them in longhand; they are easier to read. Use the word processor. Disk files and backups of tests are easier to organize and store than are hard copies. Word processing makes composing and proofreading new tests, and updating old tests to fit new situations, easier and faster. Creating a bank of alternate test forms is easier with a word processor. The possibilities for format and style make for attractive, professional documents.

•Leave good white space for separation to make the test visually enticing. Think of the test as good food for the mind. Poorly presented food for thought is unappetizing.

•Keep items vertical. Many items can be presented in the list format. Words presented horizontally are great for encouraging the flow of thought, but not the best for specific directions, steps, or choices.

Pay Attention to Vocabulary

•Specialized vocabulary has a place on tests, but watch out for vocabulary that was not taught or was used infrequently in class. Unfamiliar vocabulary can make demonstrating mastery more difficult.

•Beware of the double negative. It causes confusion and is not a good thinking tool.

Test What You Teach and Know What You Taught

•Sometimes items that were never taught or are taught briefly, without sufficient reinforcement, work their way into tests. Proofread tests to be sure the essential material that was taught is really covered.

Don't Overdo It

•Determine how many samples of problems or ideas really need to be tested to know if the student has mastered the material. Consider using more frequent, shorter tests as opposed to long, chapter-length tests; limit the number of items in matching exercises. Too much of a good thing can be a problem, especially for a student with a learning disability or attention deficit.

Teach and Encourage the Use of Coping Skills

•Scratch paper is useful for "dumping" the information students are terrified they will forget, such as formulas, definitions, or steps in a process. It is handy for rewriting directions or test items. For example, students can rewrite any questions that have double negatives.

Quizzes Are Good

•Design tests that can be finished within half or three-quarters of the full class time. Give an assignment so that students who finish earlier can still be using class time for class purposes. Students who need the full time can use it without appearing to be different from the others. And, they will not be as distracted when they see other students leaving.

•Color is helpful if students know how to use it effectively. For example, many students can benefit from having direction words, key ideas, and important details highlighted. The use of color helps students focus their attention and simplifies the text. Word processing helps instructors incorporate shading, bolding, and other markings.

Making tests more meaningful for students is not lowering standards or offering a guarantee that all students will pass. It simply makes the testing process a more meaningful opportunity by which all students may demonstrate mastery.

Joyce Whiteside, *Instructor, Center for Students with Disabilities*

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The Hitchhiker

It happened on one of New Mexico's unusual rainy days this last semester. My daughter and I were tending to some errands in the afternoon when a light rain shower began. As we turned out of the college parking lot and onto the street, we saw a woman walking in the rain. She carried a bag loaded with books, and her physical disability was such that it caused her to walk with a tedious and somewhat unsteady gait.

As we passed her, the rain intensified. So I turned around and pulled up beside her. My daughter asked the walker if we could give her a ride. The woman, surprised and obviously relieved, immediately answered, "Oh yes, thank you…thank you…".

As she got into our car, I noticed her glasses were wet with rain. I asked her name and then told her who we were. Surprisingly, our new passenger had wanted to get in touch with me; she was to be in my class the next day and wanted to know about the required books.

I asked her where she was headed, and she gave me the address of her house. "That is on the other side of town!" I exclaimed. I could not believe that she had intended to walk that far—it was about two and one-half miles!

"How did you get to class this morning?" I asked.

"I walked!" she replied.

"All they way from your house?" I questioned with disbelief. She responded like it was nothing out of the ordinary. "Yes, all the way from my house," she said smiling.

I explained all about the bus possibilities, but she already knew about the bus. It was just that there was no room for her that week to take the bus.

"Well, how were you going to get to class tomorrow?" I questioned her.

She replied. "Oh, I'll walk…I don't mind."

I couldn't believe it! I told her that I would be glad to pick her up in the morning and then see about arranging for a ride.

In our conversation on the way to her house, she told us about herself. We visited about her family, her children, and her brother.

"He was my inspiration," she said. "He wanted me to go to college. He was going to give me a ride to and from school everyday, but he was killed in a car accident in May."

We continued to visit until we pulled up in front of her house. By then I knew all about her; she had three children and three step-children; she wanted to get her college degree.

We parked in front of her home. The rain was coming down even harder and faster. As she opened the door, she thanked me once again.

I will never forget her words as she got out of the car. "Don't worry about me…I'll be all right. Don't worry…some day I'm going to be somebody!" And with that she closed the door and walked unsteadily into her house. Her inspiring attitude made me see what a complainer I was. I admitted to my daughter that I needed to work on that. Our passenger had shown me the importance of overlooking momentary troubles.

The words "I will be somebody" just stuck in my heart and mind. The world may not know who she is or who she will become. And this thought came to me: *You already **are** somebody! All of us could take a lesson from you!*

I am certain I was destined to meet her. After encountering her, I looked at myself and my instructor role more closely and found myself lacking. I saw again the great opportunity and privilege I have as an instructor in a community college. For that day and the rest of that week, even the thought of her inspired me and still does today.

Judy Brandon, *Instructor, Student Success*

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Midlands Math Meet—An Experience in Fun

Fun, relevant, exciting—not exactly characteristics usually associated with mathematics. But it is exactly what comes to mind for sixth and seventh grade students who have participated in the Midlands Math Meet (MMM) at Midlands Technical College.

Since a major factor affecting mathematics accomplishment at the college level may be traced back to problems from earlier years—fear of a subject considered difficult; lack of interest in math; experience with unenthusiastic approaches to mathematics; and other less-than-positive associations with mathematics—we set out to provide a different kind of mathematics experience. In an effort to encourage interest in and enthusiasm for mathematics in young people, our two-year college in conjunction with local school districts has instituted an annual mathematics competition for sixth and seventh grade students. Our specific goal was to create a competitive event for middle school students that would showcase problem-solving pedagogy and incorporate teamwork (collaborative learning), hands-on manipulative work, and real-world applications. This competition, now in its sixth year, has been enthusiastically received by the participating faculty and students, their families, and the general public, as evidenced by parent and teacher comments, positive publicity, numerous letters to event organizers and the newspaper, and the many willing volunteers each year.

Participating schools come from the school districts in the college's service area. Each participating school is permitted to send up to ten students at each grade level, selected by the school on teacher recommendations after practice sessions at the home school. Usually, there are approximately 300 students participating. For the competition, the students are not grouped by schools, but are randomly assigned to teams of six.

The competition is designed to focus on a number of different skills and reasoning modalities: team work, individual work, practical applications (real-world professionals provide job-related environments and problems), ability to think/respond quickly, and ability to form an efficient working group (students quickly see how power is increased when they work as a team). A set of warm-up exercises is completed prior to the official contest to get the students thinking and working as a team, and is also used as a basis for awarding some of the door prizes.

Specifically, these are the parts of the competition.

- **Individual Effort**—Each member of the team works eight timed problems; the team score is the total number correct. (Example: If a magazine subscription is $8 per month, what is the yearly cost?)
- **Jeopardy**—Patterned after the TV show, teams select problem categories, with the quickest correct answer winning. (Example: Fractions Category. 1/3 of 1/4 of 1/5?)
- **Math at Work**—Teams are presented applied problems by professionals from the world of work, and in the simulated work environment, where possible. The team, as a group, works mathematical problems related to the applied area. (Example: Environment—a machine tool technology drinking cup production process; Problem—If each cup requires .035 ounces of material, how many pounds of material are required to produce 5000 cups?)
- **Teamwork**—Each team works together on a set of six problems and submits a single answer sheet. The team score is the number correct. (Example: A standard brick face is 2.25" x 8", including the mortar joint. How many bricks will be needed for a wall two bricks thick, eight feet high, and 40 feet long?)
- **Hands-On**—This is a group exercise for each team requiring geometric manipulations, spatial relations, and orientations. (Example: Arrange hexagons, triangles, and parallelograms to form a specified shape.)
- **Wheel of Fortune**—Patterned after the TV show, teams get to select letters by spinning the wheel. But before a letter may be placed, a math problem must be solved. The team with the most "money" at the end wins. (Example: Category - mathematician; Phrase - Sir Isaac Newton; Problem to be solved - What is the area of a semicircle three feet in diameter?)

The various categories include both word problems and numeric/algebraic problems on topics including

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geometry, numbers, probability, percent, etc.

Trophies are awarded to the overall winning team, and then to winning teams in each of the individual categories. For additional fun and excitement, door prizes are also awarded—calculators, commemorative T-shirts, and college memorabilia. Of course, they have pizza for lunch first.

The heterogeneous grouping into teams makes the competition rewarding for everyone. Even the less proficient student has a positive experience in contributing to the team's effort and sharing in their potential for winning. This process involves many students in mathematics activities, encourages enthusiasm in everyone, and demonstrates the importance and practicality of mathematics in everyday life.

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John R. Long, *Math Meet Director, Mathematics Department*

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Building Connections on Day One

My composition course incorporates group work and writing, and I have created a first-day activity that emphasizes both. I have tried different activities on the first day, but while most techniques forced interaction, my suspicion was that students saw them as unnecessary "games." So I tried an activity that ties together the class introductions and the first day's writing sample.

After reviewing the syllabus, I divide the class into groups of two students each and have them interview one another for 15 to 20 minutes. I give specific instructions about the kind of information they are to collect and tell them to take notes from which they will write a short paper about the person they interviewed. With the essay in mind, I tell them to think of some unique aspect of the person. This helps them establish a focus and goal for their interview and paper, and in turn, helps them avoid writing rambling essays. The students divide into groups, talk and take notes, and write their essays for 30 minutes.

By integrating the traditional first-day introduction exercise with the writing diagnostic, I achieve several goals:

1. Students see that my composition class will be a discussion-oriented class, not a passive learning environment.
2. They gather important information about other students.
3. From their notetaking, they learn that gathering information and learning from that information takes more effort than just listening or reading; they must synthesize information and determine what is important and what is not.
4. In writing about the people they interview, students see an immediate application for the group activity.
5. Essays that students produce about other class members are much more enlightening than the more typical first-day diagnostics that require them to discuss their writing experiences or some memorable event. Furthermore, I can gather interesting background information about each student.

The key to this exercise is having students write about another person; this activity not only establishes connections between students but also with the work we will be completing throughout the semester. It connects gathering information with writing, an important skill for composition students to master. By having each student write about one of his or her peers, I am able to see how students perceive each other. This activity also allows me to make connections with my students.

Plan on at least an hour for interviewing and writing. It may be necessary to conduct the interview one day and complete the writing diagnostic on the next.

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Student to Student: Marketing Which Solves Problems

Does this sound familiar? A student calls your college requesting information. Someone writes down the name and address, and a catalog or application is sent out in the next day or two. The name and address are discarded, and nothing else happens. No one from the college follows up to see if the material was received. The prospective student does not follow up by applying or by contacting the college again, and no one at the college knows why.

Pellissippi State Technical Community College is now using students to track inquiries to the college and to respond to questions and concerns that prospective students may have. The new process, which has been in place for a year, has allowed the college to help prospective students determine the right questions to ask before they make a decision about entering college, and it is also giving the college a reputation for personal service unlike that of any other institution in our community.

To assist our students in contacting and tracking prospective students who have made inquiries about Pellissippi State, the college purchased Enrollment Management Action System (EMAS) from Noel-Levitz National Center for Enrollment Management. The college also set up workstations with personal computers, telephones, and headsets for the six student telecounselors who are trained and directed by a full-time supervisor. The student telecounselors work from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday. Obviously, this is a large commitment on the part of the college, but the benefits have gone beyond an increase in enrollment.

Pellissippi State's system works very efficiently. A prospective student calls or writes the college for an application or for general information. The information is sent, and in a few days a student telecounselor calls to see if the material has been received and if there are other questions which need to be answered. Most often, there are questions about financial aid which can be answered or referred to an expert, and the telecounselor even offers to set up a campus tour or interview with a department head. Sometimes a prospective student simply wants help filling out the application form.

Even though we think that people already feel they get too many telephone calls at home, our calls are well received. It also helps to let parents know that Pellissippi State is interested enough to call their children and provide assistance. One prospective student was interested in a program we did not offer. She said, "I have inquired about this program at four other schools, and you are the only one to contact me personally." Even though she could not attend, she said, "I want to thank you for taking the time to call." The feedback we receive has been overwhelmingly positive.

We often find that the material we sent has been put aside and forgotten. A call from a Pellissippi State student often turns the forgotten package into an application and enrollment. A typical comment is, "You called at just the right time. I needed a little push." We have relearned that enrolling in college can be frightening for many of our prospective students. We find that talking with another student who recently went through the experience makes it easier for people to ask questions. We also find that our nontraditional students are most reassured to know they will not be surrounded only by "teeny-boppers."

That first call from our telecounselors is very important, but our system is used for much more. Once a prospective student is in our computer, our telecounselors make contact at several crucial points in the enrollment process. Pellissippi State contacts students at three stages—inquiry-level to answer questions, applicant-level to assist in applying, and completer-level to motivate students to complete the process with transcripts and other pertinent information. Student telecounselors also call to notify applicants of testing dates, to remind them to make appointments with academic advisors, and to give them an opportunity to ask general questions about Pellissippi State. The student telecounselors also mail them information they may still need. Once the application has been completed, Pellissippi State calls to remind the prospective student of when and where to register and when fees are due. An important benefit is that incoming calls to admissions have been reduced because our proactive system gets the right information

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into the right hands.

The Pellissippi State student telecounselors also generate all outgoing mail for admissions. The telecounselors can determine the right direct mail pieces to be sent in response to each inquiry and can assign a specific date for them to be sent. Since they can also track every piece of mail which is sent to prospective students and applicants, duplications and missent mail have been reduced.

Pellissippi State's system of using students to assist students has improved our enrollment. More important, it has improved our attitude about how to enroll people in our college. We are more organized, and we guarantee that our prospective students will get the attention they deserve. We hope that this initial connection between student and college will set the stage for success throughout the academic career.

Allen Edwards, *President*

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Successful Students Can Tell Others How

Survey of Physics is an introductory-level course for students applying for admission to the physical therapy assistant program. Many students fear or have a generally negative attitude toward the course. In some cases, this attitude persists throughout the semester, negatively affecting performance.

Yet, some students do well. Many former students who made A's in this course and had begun their PTA courses reported, "We thought we were stressed-out in physics, but we're completely stressed-out now...We really are using the things we learned in physics...Thank God for physics." I thought it would be constructive for my next survey class to hear these comments at the beginning of the semester. Perhaps these students could also share what they did to succeed in the course.

After considering several options, I decided to conduct taped interviews with four former students, all of whom had made A's. The result was a 20-minute program entitled "Success in Survey of Physics." These former students were eager to participate, and I gave them a list of questions to think over in advance of the taping:

1. What academic background did you have in math and science before entering the course? Do you think it was sufficient?
2. Do you think that a student's attitude toward the course and toward his own ability can affect performance? What is the best attitude for success?
3. Do you think that problem assignments are an important part of the course?
4. Do you think that drill is an important part of the course? Did the instructor ever ridicule students if they made a mistake at the board?
5. Do you think lab work is an important part of the course?
6. Do you think that the understanding of physical principles you gained from Survey of Physics is useful in your subsequent physical therapy course work?
7. Do you think the experience you gained in lab is useful in subsequent course work?
8. What recommendations do you have for students who want to succeed in Survey of Physics?

The interview turned out even better than I had expected. My questions were answered spontaneously and energetically, and students offered many pointers. The following semester, I showed the videotape on the first day of class, and a good measure of enthusiasm was transmitted to my new students. A more positive attitude was evident, and the students seemed to work harder. On their own initiative, many students formed study groups and scheduled extra sessions for help with homework.

Although retention only marginally increased, the class average was 2.76/4 compared with a 2.43/4 average for previous classes. The student interview may be a useful tool for increasing motivation and success.

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E-mail: The Keyboard to Intercultural Understanding

Several years ago, in response to the influx of international businesses served by our college, our faculty decided to include intercultural awareness as a collegewide competency to be implemented across the curriculum. Many of our students are native South Carolinians and know little of life and customs beyond this area; the intercultural e-mail exchange has proved to be an effective way to help basic writing students discover another culture while helping them develop as writers.

Since summer 1994, my students have communicated over Internet with ESL (English as a Second Language) or EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students at City College of New York, Syracuse University, and Niigata University in Japan. These partnerships have given my students personal contact with students from countries around the world, including China, Russia, the Dominican Republic, France, Turkey, Japan, Korea, and Mexico. To facilitate this assignment, each student is given an e-mail account and is paired with another student in the partner class for semester-long correspondence.

To locate partner classrooms, I subscribed to Intercultural E-Mail Classroom Connections (IECC), an e-mail forum established to enable teachers to locate partner classrooms for e-mail exchanges, by sending a message to **iecc-he-request@stolaf.edu** and typing the word **subscribe** in the body of the message. Then by posting a message to the list, I was able to find teachers with complementary goals and compatible classes. I had had no contact with these colleagues before this exchange.

Having a computer lab assigned to the project is not essential, but providing computer access somewhere on campus is. I have had students write inside and outside of class, though "borrowing" a computer lab for an hour a week has worked best for my classes since most are unfamiliar with computers, some are anxious, and many need guidance. While our college does not supply computer accounts for all students, it has been willing to grant accounts to our students in developmental English courses for one semester.

My students, most of whom are reluctant writers who lack confidence, become motivated to write when they have a purpose for writing and an eager audience. The exchange provides both. Though they are required to correspond only once a week for the project and have no access to Internet at home, many students take the time to write more frequently. Through this exchange of ideas, they also begin to develop audience awareness since they are writing to a "real" person and receiving responses. They must adapt to their audience or be misunderstood; and because the communication is two-way, if they are unclear or leave out vital information, the partner asks questions. By communicating with a partner, students gain confidence and begin to see that their words can be effective. Also, since e-mail is an equalizer, appearance, popularity, and social status are unimportant. Exchanges with struggling immigrants and privileged internationals alike have been effective.

To have a successful exchange, both teachers in the partnership must agree on one or more projects to incorporate in the content and grade for the course. The major assignment for my exchanges is a three-page, typed culture contact profile. The paper includes information about the partner (interests, hobbies, goals, family, country of origin), about the partner's life in the US, and about the culture of the partner's native country (religion, holidays, foods, customs, role of women). To initiate the project, students brainstorm in class about possible questions and appropriate topics to discuss with their partners. Then they gather information for the next nine or ten weeks. During this time they may also be required to discuss readings and share ideas in preparation for other papers they are writing, but the main thrust of the exchange is the preparation for the culture contact profile.

The dynamic nature of the exchange adds excitement and energy to the classroom, as well as substance and content to students' papers. Through e-mail, students discuss such wide-ranging topics as the role of women in the Dominican Republic, religious persecution in the former Soviet Union, the celebration of the Chinese New Year, and revolution in Nicaragua. A world map is posted in the classroom, and students eagerly locate these distant sites. Not only do students broaden their outlooks and gain a better understanding of a different culture, but they also gain a better appreciation of their own culture by supplying information to their partners who are also preparing profiles of their newfound

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who are also preparing profiles of their newfound South Carolina friends.

One of the highlights of the course comes at the end of the term when students give short oral reports on their partners. Though they have been sharing information informally throughout the course, these short scheduled presentations give students the chance to present what they have learned to all their classmates and to summarize and reflect collectively on the experiences of the term. Some proudly display photographs, some describe unexpected phone calls, and many express surprise and pleasure that they have developed a friendship with someone from such a different background. But the most common response involves understanding. Students begin to see beyond stereotypes and marvel at how much they have in common with their partners.

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Adapting Familiar Technology to Teaching

Students who work full-time and choose to attend weekend college can easily reach faculty and fellow students during the week to clarify assignments, get questions answered, work on group projects, submit arguments, and get feedback on their progress by using technology such as e-mail, fax machines, and the Internet.

Some students need detailed instructions about how to get on and use the Internet; how to develop, transfer, and retrieve files; and how to reach a Home Page. However, after an initial lesson, students usually take off on the technology that allows 24-hour access to me and to other students.

I have discovered that students' motivation, satisfaction, and participation increase dramatically. I was concerned, initially, that employers would not allow their employees who were in my class to use the technology at work (if they did not have access to it at home). Much to my surprise and delight, employers allowed them time to learn on the technology that is used daily in the workplace. Some employers have become so interested and involved in the process that they have given employees access to other organizational resources to help them with class assignments.

Students become much more confident and proficient when they apply what they are learning to real-life situations. Most report that they process what they are learning best when they use real-life technology.

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Humor's Role in Preparing Future Leaders

Humor in the workplace has recently become an important topic in management publications such as *Harvard Business Review*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Training Magazine*, and *Business Week*. In addition to books and articles written on humor, humor seminars and workshops are being offered around the country.

While the study of humor is *not* new, investigating its use in the business world *is*. Many benefits of humor have been suggested by writers, from reducing stress to enhancing communication. One of the most widely promoted benefits is that humor appears to fulfill an individual's psychological desire to be part of a group. Seemingly, people have a natural desire to be part of a team, whether it is professional or social.

Beyond good pay and strong benefits, a company should give people a sense that they are part of a team. Having fun on the job is one way to achieve a teamwork attitude. Teams that laugh together can work together. The Superiority Theory of humor helps explain how individuals with a sense of humor are able to achieve cohesiveness. Members of a group see humor as being part of the social or cultural identity of the group.

Among the companies that make humor an integral part of their organization is Odetics, a California company that makes robots and spaceborne tape recorders. Reflecting their commitment to the development of humor, Odetics has had a Fun Committee since 1982. Employee activities, such as a hula hoop contest, bubble-gum-blowing competitions, and telephone-booth stuffing, have been sponsored by the Fun Committee. Odetics believes that such activities foster a feeling of being a part of a team.

Humor also promotes novelty, divergent thinking, creative problem solving, and risk taking. The Incongruity Theory of humor helps explain how an individual is able to find an unexpected or novel way to approach a problem using a sense of humor. Something incongruous does not fit a person's conceptual patterns and ordinary ways of looking at things. In a humorous frame of mind, people are distanced from the practical and ordinary and are able to benefit creatively from the incongruity.

When people are laughing, their brains seem to operate more efficiently and symmetrically. Unfortunately, most people do not use both sides of the brain equally. Usually, people tend to favor either the logical side or the creative side. Humor seems to facilitate a more balanced cerebral activity that leads to creative thinking. This creative thinking produces different solutions to problems than the individual or team might otherwise generate.

Management consulting firm Robert Half International reported that in a study of personnel directors at 100 of the nation's largest corporations, 84 percent report that people with a sense of humor are more creative, less rigid, and more willing to try new ideas and methods. The findings of this research suggest that laughter results in several physiological changes in the body that may be the reason for increased creativity and flexibility.

Hodge-Cronin & Associates, a management consulting firm in Rosemont, Illinois, regularly conducts surveys on humor in the workplace. They survey approximately 600 top executives from various-sized corporations. Here is a sample of the findings from their 1994 study, *Humor in the Workplace*:

- 100 percent of the executives responding stated that humor had a positive impact in a business situation.
- 95 percent of the executives stated that all things being equal, they would more likely hire a candidate with a sense of humor.
- 80 percent of the executives stated that humor can have a positive effect when dealing with foreign executives provided you understand the culture and use humor appropriately.
- 43 percent believed that the use of humor is decreasing. While the use of humor is declining, the demand for it is increasing.

Based on the findings of Robert Half and Hodge-Cronin, a sense of humor appears to be a sought-after skill in the business world. Some corporations around the globe looking for ways to improve their productivity are so desperate to learn how to encourage humor in the workplace that they are turning to "humor consultants" for help. Interestingly, while a majority of corporate executives contacted report that a sense of humor is essential for success in the business world, business

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schools largely ignore the use of humor in the curriculum.

How can teachers use humor as an instructional tool? Teachers do not have to be able to "tell a joke" to use humor successfully. However, they should pay close attention to possible humor in situations. One of the easiest ways to achieve a reputation for having a great sense of humor is to laugh at other people's anecdotes. After all, if someone tells a great joke in the forest and no one else is around to hear it, is it really funny?

Following are some suggestions for developing and promoting the use of humor in the classroom.

1. Keep a book of jokes or cartoons handy, and read something funny 10 minutes before teaching a class. It makes good sense to keep a first aid kit for medical emergencies, so why not keep a "mirth kit" to provide first aid for mental health. A good laugh enhances a teacher's ability to communicate effectively with students.
2. Look for amusing anecdotes that can be used to illustrate difficult concepts. Humor is everywhere–in the newspapers, on the television, and in the classroom. Attempt to find the absurd in everyday life. Save cartoons, clippings, quotes, and humorous anecdotes. When a situation arises, use humorous stories, personal or otherwise, to help students retain information.
3. Utilize analogies that transform abstract ideas into more familiar examples. Then ask students to think of other analogies that could be used. See how many different analogies students can derive to illustrate the same concept.
4. Use colorful expressions and homemade "props" to communicate important ideas. Exaggerate a point to let students know it is important. Vary voice intonations and body language to bring a point to life.
5. Laugh **at** yourself. The ability to laugh at oneself is seen as an indication of positive self-esteem. Also, students' anxiety may be reduced by sending the welcome message that the teacher is human and admittedly fallible. The teacher's willingness to be spontaneous and imperfect seems to assure students of a more dynamic and forgiving learning environment than they usually experience.
6. Laugh **with** your students. Such laughter helps to promote a bond between teacher and students. However, a teacher must always be sensitive to every student and not embarrass anyone needlessly by laughing **at** a student.

While humor does not replace the need for solid content, effective presentation, and logical subject flow, displaying a sense of humor in the classroom is highly recommended. Humor is not the ultimate goal; it is a tool to help make a point. Humor appears to have a role in teaching, and it should be considered as a classroom tool by teachers. Studies have shown that classroom humor increases student attentiveness, decreases class monotony, and leads to superior retention of material.

Humor can provide valuable feedback for an instructor. Students do not laugh unless they are paying attention. Once instructors use humor, students often feel more comfortable in displaying a sense of humor themselves. Even if a teacher does not get giant laughs, this short break from the routine can revitalize students so they may be more attentive during the rest of the lesson.

Students need to realize that sense of humor is a skill that they can and should develop. Humor is a perspective, a way of looking at and coping with life. Encourage students to practice laughing as they would any other skill. In addition to promoting a teamwork attitude, they may find that humor increases their mental flexibility.

Countries and companies around the world are seeking new ways to be productive and remain competitive. It would be presumptuous to suggest that humor alone could help a firm move into a top position in its industry. However, humor can go a long way toward promoting creative thinking and teamwork in the firm. Encourage a sense of humor in your students by capitalizing on the many opportunities for humor in the classroom. Humor may be one of the most important skills to develop in order for today's students to become the leaders of tomorrow.

Linda Hefferin, *Professor, Business*

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Yes, a Quality Team CAN Work in a Community College!

Much has been written about total quality management philosophy and whether it can work, or is useful, in an institution of higher education. It seems that many efforts to implement the philosophy and practice have met with resistance, or have just not been workable. In fact, in many institutions, the entire field of Continuous Quality Improvement is seen as a joke by some.

The Dallas County Community College District made a commitment several years ago to train staff and faculty in this philosophy. Results have been mixed, but some successes are evident. In early 1993, the president of Cedar Valley College appointed an administrator to chair a professional development team composed of representatives from across the campus. The team's charge was to create professional development activities which would meet the needs of all college employees. There was no attempt to identify the group as a quality team or to insist that the group use quality tools. However, a facilitator was assigned to the team, and at least half the members in the original team had quality training.

After lengthy discussion and brainstorming, the team developed a purpose statement: The Professional Development Team will create opportunities for personal and professional renewal and development for the employees of Cedar Valley College. The Team will assess needs, plan activities, and evaluate the success of those activities.

The team took charge of the fall professional development day activities and decided to conduct a campuswide needs assessment to determine the professional development needs of all employees. The team also obtained approval to manage a fund to implement its activities.

Since this team has been in existence, it has changed leadership several times. The current leader is a full-time instructor. Membership on the team is determined by the team itself, with priority given to representation from all employee groups and to members who understand the commitment they make when agreeing to join the team. While the team often enlists assistance from employees who are not on the team, all team members accept responsibility for implementing activities and evaluating success. Any team member who refuses this responsibility is either gently prodded by other team members to assist with the work or is ultimately invited off the team. The team has full authority to respond to results of needs assessments and to design and implement activities as it sees fit.

Needs assessments and evaluations of activities have consistently led the team to focus on technical training and internal community building. This past academic year the team implemented or sponsored 12 software training workshops, eight social activities, five educational teleconferences, and six other presentations including a research presentation, a workshop on survival skills for healthy families, workshops on diversity and stress management, and several motivational speakers. Members of the team found presenters, scheduled rooms, and advertised the activities. The final team responsibility is to conduct a campuswide evaluation of the activities and to collect suggestions for additional professional development.

The activities of the Professional Development Team do not replace travel and conference opportunities for faculty, but enhance the ability of all employees to get the training and development experiences they believe they need to be more productive employees. Most activities are designed to cut across work groups, thereby serving to build community while enhancing skills.

When developing a self-directed quality team such as this one, it is important for college administrators to understand that the team must be given both the freedom and the responsibility to assess needs and develop and implement activities to respond to the assessments. Teams which are required to carry out an administrator's agenda will never develop into a continuous improvement team. It is also important that the team have access to a facilitator or have members who have facilitation skills. The team's success should be judged by college employees, not just by upper-level administration. At Cedar Valley College no one calls the Professional Development Team a TQM or CQI team. Total Quality Management or Continuous Quality Improvement concepts are not discussed, but they are

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practiced by the team because they work. Thus, the team does not bear the burden of some teams; that is, they do not exist so that the college can pretend to have a Continuous Quality Improvement program. Instead, the CVC Professional Development Team is truly, in every sense, a quality team doing quality work.

Claire Gauntlett, *Dean, Institutional Effectiveness and Research*

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Interacting with the Community

When citizens of a community do not see and hear what happens on their local college campus, they may fabricate unrealistic scenarios about how the "cultural elite" are misspending public money or misinforming students. Worse, citizens of the community may not realize that the college offers a wide variety of services and benefits that extend beyond the classroom.

Clatsop Community College has created numerous opportunities for people in the community to interact with the college—and the college with them.

Faculty members share knowledge of their disciplines.

- Science instructors offer physics and chemistry courses for children through the parks and recreation department each summer.
- Math instructors offer algebra workshops to high school students who need extra help.
- The anthropology instructor visits local schools with "bags of bones" to share and discuss.
- Writing instructors teach a college writing course at the local high school for advanced students who want to get a jumpstart on their college work.
- Business instructors send their students into the community to study area businesses.
- The speech instructor volunteers at the local radio station, and students benefit from his forums that provide them experiences with "on air" time.

Administration and support staff share their skills and expertise.

- They work closely with the Chamber of Commerce to identify training needs in the local community.
- The "Arts on Stage" program provides a variety of cultural events to the community (e.g., poetry, dance, drama, music).
- The college library is free and open to the public, and provides the only interlibrary loan service in the county.
- The disabilities specialist donates her time to work with the blind.

The college reaches out to the community and brings the community to campus, as well.

- Individuals in the community frequently are asked to participate in college hiring processes—e.g., a local bookstore owner served on the selection committee hiring an English instructor.
- The business department regularly invites local business owners to come to campus and share their ideas about future business training needs in the community.
- Local nursing professionals serve on the nursing program's curriculum advising committee.
- Low-income senior citizens can attend college classes at no cost.
- Local experts teach some noncredit courses on such topics as financial planning, conversational Japanese, and calligraphy.

The college enjoys a friendly, mutually respectful relationship with the citizens of Clatsop County and Astoria. In a recent survey of this population, the college learned that 83% of the respondents had either attended a class at CCC or had visited the college; and respondents gave the college a score of 92% for "importance to the community." We believe that we have put the "public" back into "public education."

Julie Brown, *Instructor, English*

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Putting the "Mystery" Back into Writing

During my junior year at college, I was able to spend part of the year abroad at the University of Devon in Exeter, England. The British university experience was wonderful, but perhaps the assignment that meant the most to me was researching a few lines of poetry that came with no title, author, or any other identifiable markers other than the text itself. "Testing for the unknown" experiments that encourage students to use their analytical powers of deduction are common in chemistry classes, but this experiment in English was new to me. By using the *Oxford English Dictionary* to set the time period, and then several anthologies to narrow down the writer, I finally found Tennyson's "Guinevere."

The question then became how could I adapt this assignment for my Composition I community college students, many of whom lack self-direction and a knowledge of literature? And what would be the benefits of such an activity?

Because so much writing in the workplace involves using documents as templates, this assignment is valuable in that it gets students to really look at a piece of writing—at what it is, what it says, if the language is dated, etc. The students form groups (two or three in each) that take a piece of "mystery" writing from a 10-page handout that everyone receives. The handout includes excerpts by writers such as Homer, Jane Austen, Shakespeare, Chaucer, Poe, and Keats. The students must then find author, title, date, and any background information about the author that applies to the piece of writing. In a five-minute oral presentation, the group also tells the class how they found the mystery writer.

In designing the assignment, I first thought about the learning objectives. In the beginning weeks, I emphasize that writing is an activity that involves both hemispheres of the brain—right brain for creativity, left brain for analysis. We practice several techniques to aid the invention process and do grammar and sentence variety work and peer group critiques to aid the critical process.

In the later weeks, when students have more experience with analysis and critique, this literary detective assignment accomplishes several goals:

- Students *really* look at a piece of writing to discover its format, style, purpose, and audience. It is this type of analysis they will eventually have to do in the workplace, as they match their own writing styles to company models.
- Students discover the author and time period by using new research materials in the reference section of the library, broadening each student's ability to find information.
- And thirdly, in a class focusing on the essay, this assignment gives us the opportunity to discover a writing time line for students to realize that different writing forms and styles continue to develop. As each group gives its presentation, we discuss how the excerpts from the story, poem, novel, screenplay, sermon, or essay fit into its time period. Many students have no idea when the novel, short story, or screenplay came into being and are shocked that the ancient Greeks did not have bestsellers, but told their stories through verse. Putting the various forms of literature into a time frame gives students a broader perspective.

By discussing some of the author's biography, whatever relates to the work in question, students also realize that writers throughout the ages respond to their own feelings and situations. They also understand that words can have various meanings (and spellings) throughout the centuries.

By scheduling this assignment at the end of the semester, I have given students enough background and confidence to tackle it. I make this assignment after midterm, and we take a library day so I can help them locate information on the library computers and in the reference section. Here are some of the references that help identify the "mystery writers":

The Oxford English Dictionary. A multi-volume dictionary that gives an enlarged history of each word, listing a quote and a source for each subtle change in meaning or spelling through the years. When students can identify words in their mystery writing that have a different meaning than what we use today, they can look up the words in this dictionary and date them (sometimes the excerpt appears here and the search stops).

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The Columbia Granger's Index to Poetry. A listing of poems by both the first line and the title, allowing students to use the first line to find the title and poet.

The Larousse Dictionary of Literary Characters. A listing of characters in novels or short stories.

The Oxford Companion Series (English, Canadian, American literature). Backgrounds for writers or works.

Instructors in such diverse areas as biology, history, sociology, economics, and psychology can adapt this assignment to take advantage of research materials in their own college libraries and excerpts from writers they would like to feature, perhaps as a way to use primary sources and date various theories or establish a timeline for the discipline. In psychology, students might have mystery excerpts from Freud, Jung, and Skinner, among others; in philosophy, from Plato, Locke, Erasmus, and Nietzche. It is a great way to pull everything together and end the semester!

Judith M. Fertig, *Adjunct Instructor, English*

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Computer Slides at Work

Students favor my using computer slides rather than the overhead projector to present new information. And, I have found that they work best for me, too.

- Making changes in the slides, updating statistics, and generally improving the presentation can be done quickly. Slides can be shown in any order—forward, backward, or returning to a previous slide as needed. It is as easy to go from one slide to the next as from one point to the next. By contrast, changing order is difficult with overhead slides; there are only so many jokes one can make about upside-down or out-of-order slides.
- As many files as you need can be opened on the computer. For example, I have a glossary of about 600 words, and definition slides can be brought to the screen almost instantly.
- A file can be used to set up groups in the classroom whenever students need to interact with each other.
- It is possible to print out six slides to a page, including pictures, to share with students or to use as an addendum to your own notes. My slides are on a CD-ROM in the library, and students can catch up or repeat material as needed.
- There is no need to put too many words on a single slide, and the font size can be adjusted for class room and size at no additional cost or trouble. If you use an easy-to-read font like Arial or even Times New Roman, in bold print at font size 44, it can be read in full classroom light at 30 to 35 feet. (If you present in an auditorium, use a large screen.)
- You do not have to pay attention to the slides, just face the class, answer questions, and lead discussion when you see hands go up. It is important to look into the eyes of students to see if learning is taking place and, even more important, to see if it is not!

I use Microsoft PowerPoint, but many other programs are available. TV connectors (I use TVator) for under $200 are available and work well. A large collection of clip art and sound CD-ROMs should help you create a great assortment of slides.

Visual images improve the learning process. Retention is improved when materials and information are presented in a variety of ways.

Barbara Schnelker, *Associate Professor, Behavioral Sciences*

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Cybersize Your Class

What is Cybersizing?

Cybersizing is the development, posting, and maintenance of a Home Page used as a teaching tool. The Home Page assists students in learning new accounting material while balancing the many other roles in their lives.

Cybersizing makes it possible to:

- Retrieve and print current quiz assignments
- Retrieve, view, and/or print a class syllabus
- Retrieve, view, and/or print a class schedule
- E-mail the instructor (e.g., about how to approach a homework problem, or with an excuse for missing class—here creativity knows no bounds)
- Read the course description
- Obtain problem-solving formats and answers to assigned problems
- Obtain exam review sheets.

Why Cybersize?

Missing a class does not mean students miss a handout or solution to a problem. Some of the students have access to both WWW and e-mail at-home and/or on the job. This gives them access to the accounting Home Page for updates and other information.

Cybersizing is a way to teach students how to send and receive e-mail, utilize browsers (i.e. Netscape Navigator and Microsoft's Internet Explorer), surf the net, and use search engines (i.e. Yahoo, Alta Vista) for research purposes. With school e-mail accounts, students can receive problems via e-mail and e-mail answers to the instructors as part of a final exam grade.

How to Cybersize

Once we decided to cybersize, we obtained some reference books. The most helpful was *Dummies 101: HTML*, by Deborah S. Ray (ISBN 0-7645-0032-5). A quick read, it helps you understand how HTML (Hyper Text Markup Language) works and how it displays, using browsers like Netscape and Microsoft's Internet Explorer.

Dummies has step-by-step tutorials and end-of-chapter quizzes/exercises. A CD-ROM that comes with the textbook contains both exercise files and programs. The exercise files are sample HTML documents and graphic files to use with the text lessons. HTML is a programming language that uses paired tags (i.e.< html > & < /html >, < table > & </table >, and < body > & < /body>). Web documents about tags are easily found, and we recommend: http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~tilt/cgh/ and http://www.ncsa.uiuc.edu/General/Internet/WWW/HTMLPrimerAll.html.

HTML-authoring applications lay out pages by sight rather than by guesswork. Microsoft FrontPage 97 is an excellent HTML-authoring tool with which to create a brand-new site, build a site from existing pages, or edit a FrontPage site you have already authored. You can edit HTML code directly or edit individual pages in the WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) page editor. FrontPage 97 shares a spelling checker and Thesaurus with Microsoft Office.

Developing Cybersizing Ideas

Developing a Home Page is easy. The most difficult part is thinking through what you want to do. However, you can obtain some great ideas by searching the web or by using a "top 100 sites" list compiled by any of the major computer magazines. Currently, *PC Magazine* has such a list posted at http://www.pcmag.com/special/web100/, a great start for ideas. Cybersizing is at your fingertips, just an idea away.

Keely Britton, *Adjunct Faculty, Department of Business*

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English 2: On the Air

Evaluation, speculation, proposal of solution, position paper—these are the stuff of my second semester freshman English class. In an effort to make the class meaningful and integrate its various activities, I have used collaborative task forces.

One semester as we began work on a proposal for a solution to a problem, a representative from our Chamber of Commerce came to present a survey of some of the problems facing the community—beautification, traffic, recreational facilities, etc. (Last semester, the presenter just happened to be a recent community college student who also had a few things to say about the place of good writing skills in her work.)

The task forces chose one of these problems and prepared a panel discussion. One student focused on evaluating an unsatisfactory situation (e.g., the need for a youth recreation facility in the community) on the basis of some recognized criteria; another speculated as to the cause of the problem; and another presented the panel's proposed solution to the problem. Other panel participants were prepared to discuss likely objections or obstacles to the proposal and to summarize the presentation. The entire enterprise was made especially interesting by the prospect of the program director from a local radio station coming to record the brief presentation for later broadcast as a free community service.

This project brought together otherwise disconnected phases of the course in a stimulating way. The Chamber, the radio station, and the students were all very positive about the project—and the college received some exposure, too. Everybody won!

John Hayden, *Adjunct Instructor, English*

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Practice What You Have Preached

"Practice makes perfect" or at least aids understanding. Practice exams are used as teaching tools in our developmental reading and developmental grammar courses. We give a practice final exam two class periods prior to the actual exam. It covers the same type of material and is in the same format as the actual exam, but it is shorter and allows time for discussion. Many students who may not ask for help in a regular class will ask questions in this review session.

The practice exam serves three purposes: it helps develop test-taking skills, reduces test anxiety, and serves as a review. The ability to take tests is essential to college success, and the practice exam develops important reading skills and improves students' abilities to follow directions. Many students do not know what to ask until they take the practice exam and identify areas of confusion. Test anxiety is reduced; students know what to expect, and prior exposure helps them prepare. The practice exam includes the correct answers, and students can identify what they do not know ahead of time. And, the practice exam serves as a "study sheet" and promises a second chance to learn what was not learned before when the material was covered in class.

The practice exam is a learning experience. Students often identify these exams as the most helpful of all their study tools and frequently mention them on course evaluations.

Pam Davis, *Instructor, Humanities*

Fran Turner, *Instructor, Humanities*

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Connecting Curriculum or Linking Fact and Fiction

Many students do not connect to literature. Often they believe that poems, short stories, and plays assigned in literature courses were written by "weird" people for equally "weird" readers. For a variety of reasons, the works do not seem to engage the students' minds, hearts, or imaginations. In an effort to make the piece of literature seem "real" to the students, I ask students to identify objects that appear in the literary work that seem to have some significance to the story or to the characterization. I bring these objects to class and spend time discussing NOT their importance to the story or poem, but their importance to the culture.

Last term, we were studying "Everyday Use" by the African American writer Alice Walker. In this short story, quilts are used as central images and symbols. Before starting a discussion of the story, I had students examine several handmade quilts from the nineteenth century. They marveled at the geometric intricacies of the various designs, stitch patterns, and color combinations. I showed them photographs of quilts whose patterns and names changed because of historical and political changes. My illustrations included these three historical examples:

1) the traditional rose pattern that was modified during the Civil War to include a black patch at its center and renamed the Radical Rose in recognition of the slave controversy

2) a chain pattern originally called Job's Tears, based on a biblical reference, that was renamed the Slave Chain in the early 1820's

3) a pattern of rectangles inside diagonal bands, known as Jacob's Ladder from the *Bible*, that was renamed the Underground Railroad in western Kentucky.

By the end of this presentation, students realized that quilt-making, or sewing in general, provided women with opportunities to express themselves artistically as well as make a political statement. In addition, students understood that during the American colonial period, quilt-making arose out of the scarcity and expense of imported cloth goods.

Then I focused the discussion on the students' personal experiences and knowledge of history by posing these questions:

How many of you sew? Five females out of 50 students said that they did.

How many of your mothers or fathers sew? Again, the number was small.

Why do you think sewing remains "woman's" work? Students said that needlework was perceived as "feminine" since it did not pay well and stitching required small hands.

Why do you think that women don't sew, much less quilt, today? Students suggested that we typically prefer store-bought merchandise to homemade. Others said that we do not have either the skills or the time.

How many of you have a quilt that was made by a member of your family? Two had quilts. I asked these students to explain the history of these quilts: their age, their makers, their importance, their use, etc.

Why do you think quilting almost vanished from the American scene in the 1940's? Students were able to draw upon their knowledge of American history and attributed the decline of quilting to the Industrial Revolution and women entering the workforce.

Why do you think that there is an interest in quilts today? Students said that some Americans wanted to return to the supposedly happier pre-World War II times; others said that quilts had become artifacts of another age in American history; others suggested that quilts are practical bedcovers that provide not just beauty but warmth. One student noted that quilts, particularly the AIDS quilt, allowed us to make political statements in a visually dramatic manner. Another commented that quilts, like various kinds of needlework, highlighted the craft as well as the economic exploitation of girls and women in "sweat shops" in this and in other countries.

This discussion of the historical, socioeconomic, and cultural elements of quilt-making led us into an analysis of the importance of the quilts in Alice Walker's short story. Being able to relate concepts of quilting to their own lives, culture, and knowledge of American history, students were able to identify and connect to the message that Alice Walker was trying to convey in her fiction. The fiction became real to them! It engaged their hearts, minds, and souls! Without realizing it, the students had integrated their knowledge of history,

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sociology, economics, and psychology with a piece of literature. This linkage of various disciplines encouraged students to think in more complex ways, thereby enriching their learning experience in the classroom.

I shared this idea. As a result, a colleague who teaches the psychology of women decided to have students examine Susan Glaspell's *Trifles* from a feminist perspective. A sociology teacher has allowed a student to analyze Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* as representative of the African American family in the 1950's. A health teacher permitted a student to use Frank O'Connor's "A Drunkard" as illustrative of behavior in an alcoholic's family. Responses of teachers and students to the integration of ideas across disciplines have been positive, even enthusiastic.

Loretta E. Henderson, *Associate Professor, English and Communication*

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A Method for Motivation

Students in a beginning English Composition course are motivated to learn how to structure and write the varied types of the five-paragraph short essay when the final revision will be an e-mail communication to a pen pal abroad. Writing to a pen pal in China, Austria, or Africa, for example, is a positive motivational tool and can be used to improve the tone of the essay, making it warmer, livelier, and more colorful.

This teaching method combines the computer's e-mail function with a traditional method of classroom teaching. First, students are taught the structure of the essay (unity, coherence, support, and sentence skills) and then how to write the different types (introductory, narrative, process, descriptive, etc.). Then each of their essays are graded.

At this point, students are asked to focus on an added revision that will result in an informal, lively, conversational e-mail communication to a pen pal. The introductory e-mail message is sent, and pen pals are requested to introduce themselves in a return communication. The narrative (personal experience) follows, and the pen pals are asked to write of an experience they have had in return. The third e-mail writing exchange is a description of a famous landmark in the U.S., and so on.

This method of using the computer's e-mail function as a communication tool is especially helpful to students who are diligent and have mastered the technical aspects of writing, and need only to improve the warmth, imagery, and liveliness of their message.

Rose Haroian, *Assistant Professor, Humanities*

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Walking the Talk

Leadership by example—or as this management style is popularly described, "walking the talk," is a must for community college administrators in silencing the often-heard faculty protest that administration does not have a clue about the time and energy that go into preparation for instruction, delivery, and assessment of classroom teaching. I accepted a faculty-issued challenge to teach a class and thoroughly enjoyed the experience!

When I agreed to teach a three-hour evening course, "The Roots of World Cultures," little did I know that I would be adding 60 additional hours per month (as do faculty members) teaching one 16-week course. I looked forward to the first class and arrived an hour early to meet students individually and welcome them to the class. I administered the Myers-Briggs inventory indicator form G self-scorable profile; and after the inventory was scored, I asked the introverts to gather on one side of the room and the extroverts on the other. The groups took 20 minutes to discuss and list the characteristics they perceived their opposites to have and any preconceived notions they held about them.

This exercise broke the ice and opened the door for further discussions about sense and intuition, thinking and feeling, judging and perceiving. Moreover, it encouraged students to view the learning environment as a place where information is shared and challenges are welcomed, expected, rewarded, and responded to with humor.

In the next exercise, students paired off to learn about each other's hobbies, interests, and reasons for taking the course. Each introduced his or her partner to the entire class. At the end of this exercise, I asked what they had learned from each other. This exercise helped me uncover key information about the reasons students enrolled in the course, and not all were flattering to the teacher. However, the students' expressions of motivation provided some guidance for innovative instruction.

From this exercise, the students and I moved forward to build a curriculum contract. Students talked about why they wanted to learn about the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, and China in the 16 weeks we had together. They discussed why it was important to know the facts and chronology concerning those civilizations. One student asked how the cultures, values, and attitudes of today's Egypt, China, Iraq, and India compare to the ancient civilizations. We listed other issues and agreed to discuss them at subsequent class meetings. We then began building the next class schedule. This routine continued for the full 16 weeks.

Students were asked to leave questions about anything they did not understand after each class. All questions were reviewed with the instructor at the next class meeting or by phone. This individualized attention strengthened student/faculty interaction.

I designed different activities for each class. One evening I bought a scratch lottery card and won $100. I had a great idea for reinforcing a discussion about the Greek City-State and the Roman Empire. Using my $100 winnings, I made my own version of Greek and Roman Jeopardy. The prizes were $5, $10, and $20. After 50 minutes of play, all but one student had won a prize. Students were asking each other about the answers and trying to guess what the questions would be; learning superseded concern about content.

We scheduled a library visit to research questions that had been prompted by a discussion from a previous class session. Students worked independently and in small groups with the assistance of the reference librarian. After the library research session, we had an "agree or disagree" discussion. Students divided into groups of six; a scribe kept notes. Each student had one minute without interruption or comment from other members of the group to state his/her response agreeing or disagreeing with the statement: "The Afrikaners' role in the African slave trade during the 1700's has negatively affected the political and economic stability of today's South Africa." After all six members had spoken, the group took six additional minutes to discuss the statement as a group and to come to a consensus. A spokesperson shared the results with the class. Students rated this exercise as productive because they learned that consensus means being able to live with a decision. They realized that consensus is not coming to complete agreement necessarily but rather is accepting the decision as a compromise that does not

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diminish their individual values or principled conduct.

One class session was at my home. Students were invited to dinner (Chinese, Indian, Egyptian cuisine) and to come prepared to talk about one word which had been introduced during a class lecture—e.g., reformation, nirvana, Islam, barracoon, Aborigines, Rasputin, Sophists. They were to educate the group about the word they had chosen. This exercise increased student learning through library research assignments, note-taking (the Cornell Method), critical thinking exercises, and reading assignments. Students were able to experience the tastes and smells of other cultures. Through collaborative learning methods (directed topics of discussion, group papers, questions/answers), students became active participants in their own learning.

Students prepared for the mid-term examination by dividing into four groups, each asking 10 essay questions. No true/false or multiple choice questions were permitted. We spent two subsequent class periods discussing the questions and preparing for the exam. Audio-visual presentations from previous classes were used to help students recall information and formulate better questions.

Since I have made several trips to Egypt, I gave a one-hour slide presentation on Egyptian culture, showed the numerous items I had collected during my travels, and explained how ancient trades such as perfume making and papyrus etchings/drawings have been passed from generation to generation. This exercise prompted students to think about their past, their skills, their talents, their interests, and their unique selves. It also led to a discussion of genealogy.

We had learned that the Egyptians used genealogy to record the processions of their kings and leave a record of the contributions and traditions they treasured. To complement the course material, students were to undertake a study of their own roots. All students were required to trace maternal or paternal ancestors for at least four generations and document their findings through a generation-pedigree chart and biographical worksheet.

Students collected oral information from friends and relatives, old pictures, hospital records, deeds, newspapers, archives, ships' records, gravesite data, adoption records, marriage certificates, census records, death certificates, divorce records, court data, magazine stories, library references, membership lists from social/civic organizations, diaries, and church records. They became intrigued by what they found and wanted to know more. For some, the search may become a lifelong quest which will be passed on to the next generation. To others, it may have been the beginning of greater self-awareness.

To foster an awareness of self in relationship to others, students were required to participate in a community service project. They worked at the local food pantry, homeless shelter, and elementary, middle and high schools; collected toys and food; rang the bell for the Salvation Army; and more. They commented on how good it felt to "give something back even when you do not have much yourself." They learned the importance of sharing, building community support, and understanding the role of social institutions.

As the final class periods approached, I was thrilled with our progress toward understanding what the past has to do with the present. Students were active participants in their own learning. They learned that it was important to have a sense of humor and to collaborate. Some students moved from dependence to independence to interdependency in their work habits. Others were encouraged to challenge and confront, and others learned that to engage another person in dialogue improved understanding. And we had fun! My class received one of the highest ratings for the semester.

I learned that faculty should take risks. We expect students to be courageous when we ask them to speak in front of the class, keep notes for the group, and facilitate a discussion. We cannot expect our students to be courageous and model courageous academic pursuits if we do not do the same. I had an enlightening experience, and I am ready to do it again. Learn, teach, and share.

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Addressing the Needs of Students on Scholastic Probation

The Strategies for Academic Success Program provides support to students in need and reduces the percentage of academic dismissals. It includes a reorientation program, individual student assessments, follow-up sessions, a student development workshop series, an academic support group, and a student contract. Each aspect of the program can be modified, depending on a college's unique staffing and student population needs.

After screening out students who are placed on scholastic probation for reasons other than low grade point average, all other students on probation are sent a letter explaining the reorientation program, Success 101. The letter they receive is deliberately balanced between care, concern, and a sense of urgency. A one-page color document of commonly asked questions and answers, and a registration form, are enclosed. The students are advised of their preregistration status in the program. Success 101 is scheduled just prior to the first day of classes to avoid conflicts with class schedules.

• The three-hour reorientation program includes greetings from the academic director (or dean), the campus dean of students, and program coordinator(s); presentations by tutors, faculty members, the campus psychologist, the coordinator of disability support services, a motivational speaker, and peer mentors. The program agenda includes instruction, handouts, and overheads to teach GPA calculation and institutional academic standards; and motivational techniques to encourage student interest— presentations by various speakers and peer mentors (currently enrolled students who once were on scholastic probation and since have met the academic standards of the institution).

Students are advised of support services located on and off campus. They are also provided information regarding one-on-one assessments, the academic success (support) group, the workshop series, and the student contract. The resource packet contains a variety of handouts, including information on all campus resources, organizational tools, and a blank personal journal. Students are given opportunities during this time to schedule their individual assessments and preregister for workshops.

The needs of students on scholastic probation are multiple and varied. Some of the most common difficulties are related to unhealthy relationships, addiction, lack of adequate study skills, language barriers, time management issues, dissatisfaction with the institution, multiple life roles, lack of goals, disability, need for guidance with major selection, long working hours, personal issues, and family difficulties. Workshops on the more salient topics are developed each semester; college staff and existing resources combine to offer holistic services. Workshops have been provided by the Women's Center, Counseling Center, and Academic Advising Center personnel; motivational speakers, faculty members, and program coordinators also have joined forces. Workshop topics have included time management, exam strategies, resumé writing, self-esteem building, reducing math anxiety, improving study skills, body image and eating disorders, relationships, academic integrity, combating procrastination, career direction, and of a college major selection. Although these workshops are designed with the probation student population in mind, they are marketed to the entire student body. A system of preregistration, campus advertising, and reminders support this aspect of the program.

• Each student is required to meet at least twice with an academic counselor or other resource person (facilitator) to discuss his/her probationary status, probable causes for probation, and potential strategies for success. These meetings are scheduled during the reorientation program and take place during the first two to three weeks of the academic semester. Every attempt is made to allay fears and dispel myths regarding the purpose and content of this one-on-one session. During this session, the counselor or resource person follows a checklist of common potential areas of concern. The student is provided with a safe, confidential space to disclose as little or as much of his/her situation as desired. At the conclusion of this session, the student is provided with a list of ideas, strategies, resources, and/or referrals. Students also are encouraged to identify their own problem areas and strategies for success. A follow-up appointment is usually scheduled.

These individual sessions have proven to be the most valuable tools of the program, but they can require substantial staffing resources. However, the model can

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be replicated easily by training a variety of facilitators throughout the college to assess and mentor a small number of students. Some students benefit from ongoing group support.

• The Academic Success Group was established for students who self-identified as individuals desiring a structured peer-group activity. This group meets for six or more weeks during a mid-week lunch hour, scheduled when no undergraduate classes are meeting. Traditionally, the support group has been co-facilitated by one male and one female. During the first group meeting, the students choose their own ground rules and the topics they would like to discuss each week. The facilitators open each week with a different ice-breaker activity, introduce the selected topic, assign a weekly journal question, and provide weekly feedback. Light refreshments are provided, and students are encouraged to bring their lunches. Only six to eight students typically enroll in this group. Weekly topics have included planning general education requirements, combating procrastination, goal setting, communicating with professors, dealing with health issues, and managing multiple life-roles.

• The student contract is a simple form, provided in duplicate, which furnishes the students a way to document their use of services. Each time they attend a workshop, a session with a facilitator, a tutorial session, a support group meeting, or any other bonafide campus or non-campus service which is targeted at bolstering their academic success, they are to obtain signatures. These contracts are submitted to the program coordinator's office prior to the last day of final exams. This documentation, and evidence of academic improvement, can be used by the coordinators to prevent academic dismissal at the end of the semester.

The program balances a fundamental belief in strong support with adequate challenge for students. Emphasis is placed on student responsibility, follow-through, and structured goal-setting. The reflective process is valued and encouraged, through an emphasis on journal writing and facilitators' questions. Student involvement in campus activities is encouraged, yet carefully limited. Since the inception of the program, self-esteem building has become an identified program goal. Meeting the needs of students with multiple life-roles, such as working mothers, students caring for elderly parents, and fully employed students, is a particular challenge. It is often necessary to provide evening appointments.

• The evaluation process includes students' evaluations of the program and each workshop, coordinators' assessments of individual workshops, and students' feedback through journal writing and surveys. The dean of students maintains a direct tie to the program coordinators and provides feedback, as well.

The Strategies Program has been used to meet other organizational goals. Faculty have begun to refer many students, who have not yet been placed on academic probation, but appear to be candidates for it, to facilitators; and many of these students now participate in the program. This phenomenon is an encouraging sign of early intervention. The students enrolled as full participants in the program are less likely to be faced with probationary status during the following semester, and the percentage of dismissals has declined.

Currently, the program is coordinated by one administrative employee with the assistance of a graduate intern. The program is modified and augmented each semester, depending the needs of current students, staffing, and other variables. Other colleges can replicate this model as a viable way to increase retention and meet a variety of organizational goals within the constraints of existing resources.

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Writing for the Real World

Community colleges should turn out graduates who can read, write, think, and speak. Representatives of business and industry say that they can easily train graduates to do just about anything if they come with these skills. So I started thinking about how I might give my professional research and report-writing students more practical, meaningful real-world experience with examples of oral and written communication that they would find in their professions. To accomplish this goal, I implemented the following strategy.

At the beginning of the semester, the class selects a project involving some proposed improvement to our college. One semester we investigated the creation of a campus day care center for students, faculty, and staff. Another semester, the students explored building a parking garage to help alleviate parking problems. In another, students chose to research improvements to the campus grounds, focusing on more signage, better lighting, and safer walkways. One class considered establishing a peer tutor program on campus. This semester, the class is researching potential uses of a forest recently donated to the college.

Sometimes the class brainstorms ideas; but, if no ideas are generated, I select the project. The class then forms a mock company, a fictional consulting firm. We pretend the college has hired our firm to research and prepare a formal report on the topic. This report will discuss the problem or issue in detail and include our recommendations for improvement. We name our company and then organize it by departments to divide labor logically and equitably. Each department team is responsible for completing specific tasks and contributing certain information. The departments vary depending on the project. For instance, the parking garage project was divided into design/construction, personnel/operations, and legal/safety departments. The forest project has been divided into topography/access, structures, and security/liability. We try to place each student into a department that corresponds to his or her college major.

Our primary mission is to write a formal research report for the college's president. We work the entire semester generating documents to communicate with the "real world" and each other. Students learn practical research skills by writing business letters to companies, organizations, and agencies; conducting face-to-face interviews; making phone calls; and accessing the Internet and library resources. They write memos to each other to request information that will impact their own group's decisions. They write short reports in response to those requests and deliver oral presentations of their reports to practice public speaking.

Ultimately, we combine the shorter reports into one longer, formal report. As a group, we organize the report and discuss necessary changes. Then I assign each department one or more sections—e.g., table of contents, abstracts. We compile the documents, then print, bind, and send the report to the president.

The benefits of this strategy to teach professional report writing include:

1. *Assignments are more meaningful because they serve a purpose for a real audience.* This project requires students to communicate with each other and the world. Students get valuable practice composing for a practical purpose—a major characteristic of all professional writing.

2. *Students practice finding answers in the "real world."* As they seek out information and answers to their questions, students learn how to access a variety of different sources, not just books and magazines.

3. *Students practice collaborative writing.* More businesses and industries are emphasizing teamwork. Our class project requires practice with group coordination and collaboration.

4. *Students practice their problem-solving and critical thinking skills.* I serve as guide or coordinator; my job is to circulate among the groups, keep abreast of what each is doing, and form a "big picture" of the evolving project. I make suggestions, but final decisions are left to students who must generate all their own ideas and solutions.

5. *Students improve their computer skills.* The class meets in a computer lab, so students can practice accessing the Internet, composing on a word processor, and integrating small reports into a larger one.

6. *Students' enthusiasm increases.* Enthusiastic students always produce better writing. This project format requires students to become more involved in

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their own learning—writing, speaking, organizing, collaborating, researching, and thinking. They are engaged in writing activities that serve a purpose in the real world. And, they experience a sense of accomplishment when the pieces of the final report finally fit into place and the document is presented to a real audience.

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Heroes, Villains, and Values

Although I developed this essay assignment for a composition class, it is well-suited for history courses or any courses where content includes the activities of groups or lives of individuals—a literature course based on autobiographies, for instance. I call the assignment a "hero-values essay." What follows is the basic assignment, some variations, the assignment's merits, and suggestions for timing.

The assignment asks students to select an individual or group the course has covered or will cover; explain why the individual or group is heroic; and using these heroic values, show why these values are important in our world, explaining why people today should study and value the person's life or group's history.

One variation on the assignment would allow students to do the opposite; for example, a student might write a piece arguing that Christopher Columbus was not heroic at all, that the values he embodied were actually evil and would have negative results in today's world. That variation suggests another even more complex: Compare and contrast the good and bad values represented by an individual or group, and describe the outcomes of that relationship in terms of today's world. Sample theses might read, "Despite his many fine qualities—courage, vision, tenacity, and strength, Columbus should not be considered a hero by today's youth due to his extreme racism, a value that is both evil and disastrous in today's world," or "Despite holding some negative values common in his place and time (extreme racism, for instance), Columbus should still be considered a hero by today's youth due to his courage, vision, tenacity, and strength—values heroic in any epoch."

This assignment requires students to use a wide range of thinking skills from Bloom's Taxonomy. Initially, students must *recall* knowledge and then simultaneously *comprehend* and *analyze*—they will have to interpret the facts about a life or group history, infer what values underlie them, and categorize these facts according to the values they exhibit. Then, students must *evaluate* those values, judging which are most worthy (or otherwise) and worth writing about. Finally, the student must *apply* knowledge, demonstrating how those values are useful and admirable (or not) in today's world. This assignment involves the student in personal-values clarification. And, they are pushed to fuse their inner worlds with course content, what Piaget called "accommodation"; long-term memory is affected, and real learning occurs.

Presenting this assignment to students early in a course—but not collecting it until near the course's end—works best. Students can be thinking about the values of individuals or groups they encounter and have a broad range of topic choices by the end of the term. The assignment would also be a useful final exam.

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Using Student-Initiated Questions

My students must pose sociological questions as part of their course work. They are required to turn in "sociological questions" at the beginning of each week, and the only guideline is that the questions have to be sociological in nature, to deal with human issues on some level. I try not to impose or even suggest topics; I want the students to use their own experience to derive the questions.

When I began using this strategy, I had three goals in mind. First, I wanted to use the questions to assess students' ability to think sociologically and use the weekly questions to monitor their progress. Second, I wanted the students to develop the habit of questioning and use each assignment as an opportunity for students to practice. Finally, I used the questions to facilitate three types of classroom activities: to start discussions or "warm-up sessions" at the beginning of several class meetings, to facilitate a cooperative learning exercise focused on research methods in the social sciences, and to tie theoretical concepts and research data to the students' experience and personal interests.

In addition to having particular ideas about how I would use the questions, I also had an idea about the type of questions students would ask. I expected to receive more than a few outrageous or irrelevant questions, but I also predicted that students would use this opportunity to raise thoughtful substantive questions. I was half-right. I collected 326 questions from 52 students in two sections, and only five were completely irrelevant or meant to be humorous. The remaining questions not only were useful, but generally pertinent to the course and the students' concerns about current events and social issues.

In a content analysis of the students' work over one semester, treating the questions as data, I noted the most prominent themes, analyzed subsets of the questions, and grouped the input from students into four general categories. The following is a list of categories and examples of the questions. Students consistently asked about:

a.) Logistics of the course
  When are you going to talk about our group projects?
  Should we already be doing research for our papers?
  Where can I find the census in the library?

b.) Sociology or sociologists
  Are sociologists concerned about the environment?
  Do sociologists think the same on-the-job as off?
  Do sociologists ever work for major companies like Nike or IBM?

c.) Concepts that were unclear during lectures:
  What are some of the contradictions within the functional perspective?
  What are "folkways" exactly?
  Would C. Wright Mills see depression as a private trouble or a public issue?

d.) Substantive issues (i.e., race, poverty, gender, politics, etc.)
  What exactly is American culture?
  Why do people strive for the same things, like money and education?
  Why is alcohol abuse a bigger problem in the U.S. than in other countries?

Each of the categories of questions were useful as I tried to structure the course around the students' interests. For example, I decided to address most of the logistic questions as they came up during the semester. Even though most of these questions could have been answered with a reference to the course syllabus, I used them as opportunities to remind students to use the syllabus and each other as resources.

On an altogether different note, I was surprised to find the level of interest in sociologists and their work, especially given the number of non-majors in the introductory courses. We had fun with these questions. I answered some of them directly during our opening discussions, and others I worked into the lectures. I did the same with questions about concepts that were unclear. In particular, there were a number of questions on the distinction between "private troubles" and "public issues." Since this was a common problem, I took the time to conduct a cooperative learning exercise that allowed students to grapple with and learn to distinguish between private and public concerns. In this case, the questions students raised helped me

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change both the structure and the direction of the course to suit their needs better.

The largest number of questions dealt with substantive issues. Consequently, I used these questions more often than any of the others. I used the substantive questions to launch in-class discussions and to challenge students during lectures; I used some to develop a cooperative learning exercise that focused on how and why social scientists use particular research methods.

Using the questions added life to the classes. Students enjoyed struggling with issues in which they had a stake or an interest, and I was able to address logistic questions and questions about sociologists by means that were not previously available. In short, I would not have been able to answer all of the important questions students raised if I had not formalized the means for them to be asked. By formally requiring students to ask questions, I had used a powerful tool for assessing students' progress in the course. At the same time, I was involving them in an important intellectual exercise—questioning. As the end of the semester approaches, I remind students that they do not have to write and turn in more questions, but I add, "That does not mean you should stop asking them."

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Violence and Culture: Practical Applications

Curriculum that cuts across disciplinary boundaries, has practical applications, integrates diverse content, and provides examples for use of new skills in the real world is gaining popularity. However, anthropology, as a discipline, too often is perceived as having weak connections to other courses and little relevance to the world of work.

Violence and Culture is a course (to be offered summer 1998) designed to tie anthropology to other programs in the social sciences and offer an important service-learning component. It will examine violence in multiple-cultural contexts, explore resources for intervention and treatment, and provide service-learning experiences in dealing with violence. Topics will include the culture of violence, violence and gender, violence and the media, family violence, sexual violence, violence and the state, and prevention and social change.

Students' volunteer work will fulfill a service-learning requirement. Students will volunteer at agencies that deal with violence and gain a practical understanding of the theoretical and descriptive materials they cover in class. They will become more sensitive to cultural differences in preventing and treating violence—as well as differences of gender, ethnicity, and class—by volunteering at agencies with diverse programs and clientele. The service-learning component should support the school-to-career action priority of many community colleges and help to expand collaborative efforts between the community college, community groups, and businesses.

This course will integrate the cross-cultural and comparative perspectives of anthropology with timely subject matter of interest to students majoring in sociology, psychology, health and human services, law, law enforcement, and applied anthropology, as well as appealing to students seeking general studies credits. Further, it should increase dialogue and cooperation among faculty within the social and behavioral sciences, particularly through the cross-listing for violence and culture with other disciplines.

The main challenge to its successful implementation will be student reluctance to take a "non-core" class that does not fulfill particular credits toward graduation. Aggressive promotion and publicity could overcome this reluctance. Moreover, the curriculum will be easy to implement, particularly if faculty can have access to a service-learning coordinator who will handle the nuts and bolts of contracts and supervision.

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Faculty Partnerships With Library Staff

Many students are unfamiliar with the basic resources, research capabilities, and layout of library collections. Overcoming these deficiencies requires effort from students, faculty, and library staff. The social sciences faculty at New Mexico State University-Carlsbad has established an active partnership with library personnel to provide the best possible learning environment for students working on projects that require library assistance.

The partnership operates at several levels. The faculty works with the library director to acquire resource materials that are suitable and within budget. The director provides faculty with catalogs and resource announcements. Faculty indicate their choices in light of available budgets. Once the resources are acquired, faculty can put materials on reserve or allow them to remain in the general collection.

At the beginning of each semester, the library director visits classes and explains library resources, policies, and procedures; and classes are brought to the library for tours. Students who receive this extra attention have been more willing to call on library staff for assistance, and they report having learned important library procedures quickly. Library staff report that the number of problems regarding student expectations and library resources are substantially reduced when they know about the assignment before students come to the library needing assistance.

A useful tool for faculty is a library "search and find" assignment that requires students to locate resources within the facility. By working out the assignment in advance with instructors, library staff are ready to offer assistance. The assistance, however, is limited in order to have the student become familiar with the library by using its resources often and, more or less, on their own.

The library also maintains a growing collection of video resources appropriate to the social sciences. Acquisitions are made according to the aforementioned procedure. In order to encourage students to take advantage of library resources, some instructors provide extra credit for written reports about videos from the library collection. Staff and faculty have written guidelines for video checkout and return.

An equally important area of cooperation is the examination and selection of appropriate technology. The library also functions as the media center—maintaining televisions, VCR's, slide projectors, and other equipment. The library director and the faculty remain in close communication about technological needs. This process is facilitated by a committee of faculty, staff, and students; and, the library director meets with divisions, upon request, to exchange ideas and information about library and media resources.

Social science faculty also oversee the acquisition and installation of temporary exhibits in library space. A recent exhibit acquired from the New Mexico Endowment for the Humanities dealt with the Marshall Plan. Faculty installed the freestanding exhibition in library space, then gave an extra-credit assignment to students to view the display and answer questions. The exhibit not only enhanced curriculum, but provided all library patrons with an additional learning experience.

Faculty can reinforce the positive experience students should have with their campus library by effectively communicating with library staff, holding regular meetings, and implementing action-plans based on needs, resources, possibilities, and limitations. Faculty must do their part to make certain that students understand the importance of using the library. Providing syllabi and class assignments to library personnel is a simple and effective method for keeping the information loop active. Regular evaluations and actions based on feedback from those evaluations will maintain the energy and viability of the relationship.

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Innovation by Accident: Facilitating Classroom Discussion

"Class discussion is an essential component of effective classroom practice." Every teaching manual ever written incorporates this recommendation as part of the "how-to" guide to effective instruction. Class discussion is a wonderful and deceptively simple idea—so easy to advocate, so difficult to implement!

Effective class discussion requires the two-way interaction of instructor and students. It is difficult to promote effective class discussion when only one party to the conversation, namely the instructor, has any clue as to what the discussion is about. One of the most disturbing and frustrating aspects of student behavior creates such a situation—the reluctance of students to read assigned materials in advance. Students cannot adequately discuss a topic they know nothing about.

Even the most well-intended instructors often end up having class discussions with themselves—they pose questions and answer when responses are not forthcoming. Little wonder it is then that we professors have earned our stereotype for eccentric behavior—we wander around talking to ourselves because we seem to be the only ones listening!

What, then, can be done to resolve this dilemma? I came upon a solution entirely by accident. Hoping to facilitate an interesting class discussion on the topic of civil rights and liberties, I announced that students should read two cases discussed in the textbook for homework. The cases covered only two pages in the text, and I told students to be prepared to discuss the issues, facts, conclusions, and reasoning in each. I stressed the importance of reading these two cases only and promised a lively class discussion.

I entered class the next day, eagerly anticipating the interesting discussion that was sure to occur. I introduced the first case and asked for the particular facts. I was met with dead silence. Taking another tact, I asked what the case was about and what the central issues were. Silence was the response again. At first, I thought the students had misunderstood the questions, so I rephrased them. After several minutes, I realized that no one had read the case—my explicit instructions notwithstanding. I was livid. After all, I had only requested that they read two measly pages which they should have read without being reminded.

My anger and disgust were apparent. Acting impulsively, I informed the class that I was leaving and would return in ten minutes. They had that much time to form groups, read the cases, and formulate answers to the questions I had posed. Any students unprepared by then should leave.

When I returned, I acted as though class had just begun. I immediately noticed that the students were very concerned about and focused on the topic and that they were able to discuss the particulars of the cases intelligently and in detail. The ten-minute break was helpful because it gave me time to calm down and gather myself. What followed was one of the most thoughtful and in-depth class discussions ever held in my classroom. And it had occurred entirely by accident.

Despite my conscientious attempts to facilitate class discussion, it had never occurred to me to allow the students time in class to read the material I wanted to discuss. The ten minutes I "lost" while they were reading the assigned material turned out to be the most valuable ten minutes of the semester. And it occurred purely by accident, thanks to their being unprepared. I periodically incorporate such time into the semester, particularly when I want to facilitate in-depth discussion of a topic. Students' critical thinking skills have improved, and the classroom has become a more lively and interesting experience for all.

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